

STAN LEE Presents:

HOWARD the DUCK

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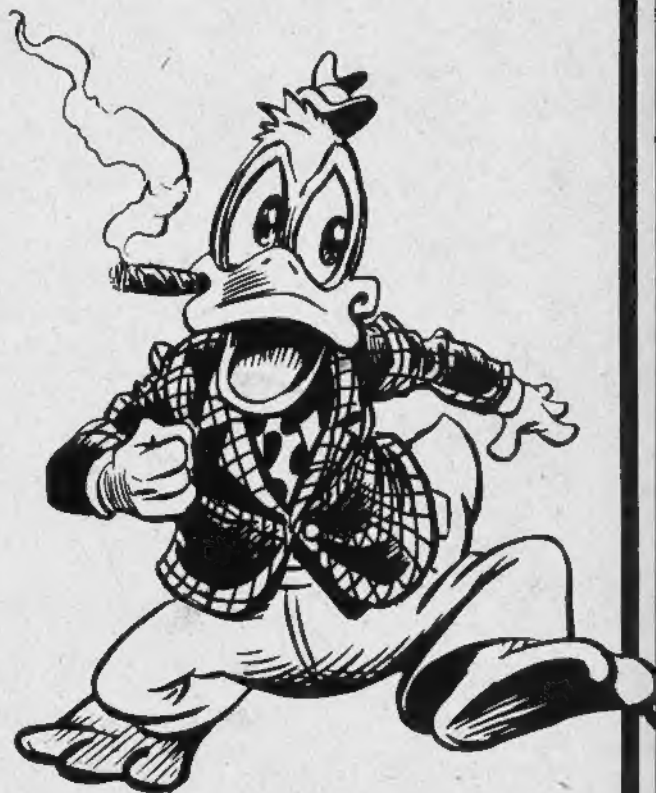
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Stan Lee
Presents
a Marvel
Magazine!

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HOWARD the DUCK[®]



Special Christmas Issue!



a CHRISTMAS for CAROL!

'T WAS THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS AND ALL THROUGH THE HOUSE...IT WOULD HAVE BEEN HARD TO FIND A CREATURE **NOT** STIRRING! THE RACKET WAS SO INCREDIBLE, THE MOUSE WORE EARMUFFS! FROM SUNUP TO WELL PAST SUNDOWN IT'D BEEN TREES AND TINSEL, STOCKINGS AND STARS, GLITTER AND GIFTS! THE HOUSE QUIVERED WITH CAROLS WRUNG FROM HEARTS OERFLOWING WITH YULETIDE CHEER!

HAIRLESS APE HEARTS, THAT IS--FOR THE KEEP-ING OF THIS CLEVELAND CHRISTMAS RINGS HOLLOW IN THE HOMESICK HEART OF ONE RATHER UNUSUAL ILLEGAL ALIEN!

MEET HOWARD THE DUCK...A VERY STRANGE STRANGER EXILED IN A STILL STRANGER LAND!

DECK THE HALLS
WITH BOUGHS OF HOLLY,
TRA-LA-LA-LA-LA-LA-LA-LA-
'TIS THE SEASON TO BE JOLLY,
TRA-LA-LA-LA-LA-LA-LA-LA...

OH, PAUL--
ISN'T BEVEWY'S
ABSOWUTEWY
DIVINE?

SNORE...

SPEND CHRISTMAS WITH US, THEN, AT THE HOME-AWAY-FROM-HOME OF THIS OUTCAST DUCK. TOAST THE SEASON WITH HE AND HIS BELOVED BEVERLY SWITZLER--WITH HIS FRIENDS WINDA WESTER AND PAUL SAME. WELCOME WITH US THIS 25TH OF DECEMBER AS WE WEAVE A YULETIDE TALE TO TOUCH THE FLINTY CORE OF THE STERNEST SCROOGE. "HUMBUG!" YOU SAY? READ ON!

POOR PAUL! HE'S STILL SOMNAMBULENT FROM THAT BULLET THAT GRAZED HIS SKULL, ISN'T HE?*

YES, BUT I WIKED TO THINK HE PWEFEWS BEING THIS WAY! NO PWOBWEMS-- NO BIWWS TO PAY! AND HE IS SO USEFUWL AROUND THE HOUSE!

PWEASE TWY TO STAY STEADY, PAWL, WHIWE I STWING THE POPCORN!

ZZZZZZZZ

*HTD #26--RICK.

YOU ALWAYS WERE ABLE TO SEE ADVANTAGE IN ADVERSITY, WINDA... UNLIKE SOME MORE DEPRESSIVE TYPE WHOSE NAME I WON'T MENTION.

OH, HOWAWD, YOU MEAN? WHY'S HE BWOODING THIS TIME?

SEARCH ME. HE'S BEEN MOPING EVER SINCE THE START OF THE CHRISTMAS SEASON. I DON'T UNDERSTAND IT. YOU'D THINK HE'D BE GLAD TO SPEND CHRISTMAS EVE...

...AMONG FRIENDS!

THIS IS IT, CLAUDE-- HOWARD AN' BEV'S PLACE. JUST PARK THE CAB AND WE'LL GO IN. THEY'RE EXPECTING US.

TO HICK
AND
BACK

YOU SURE THEY'RE EXPECTING ALL OF US, LEE. WE DIDN'T TELL 'EM WE WUZ BRINGIN' A THIRD GUEST.

STOP WORRYING, CLAUDE! HOWIE AN' MY NIECE BEV WILL UNDERSTAND! COME ON!

HOWARD'S EMPLOYER AND HIS MECHANICS CROSS THE FRONT LAWN...

MOMENTS LATER THE HEAVY TREAD OF BOOTS IS HEARD ON THE STAIRS LEADING UP TO HOWARD AND BEVERLY'S APARTMENT. THE DOOR OPENS AND...

MERRY CHRISTMAS EVERYBODY!

HOWDY, FOLKS!

UNCLE LEE! CLAUDE! OH, I'M SO GLAD YOU COULD COME TO SPEND CHRISTMAS WITH HOWARD AND ME!

YOUNG LADY, YOU'RE THE ONLY FAMILY I'VE GOT LEFT! I WOULDN'T MISS THIS FOR THE WORLD!

AN' I'D SURE LIKE TO THANK YOU FOR INVITIN' ME AN' CAROL OVER, BEV!

CAROL, THIS IS THE GENT I'VE BEEN WANTIN' YA TO MEET! SAY HELLO TO HOWARD, HONEY!

HI.

CHARMED. UH, WHO...?

CAROL? A BOZO LIKE CLAUDE STARKOWITZ WITH A GIRL?

A KID-TYPE GIRL?

CAROL'S MY DAUGHTER, HOWIE. YOU NEVER MET HER 'CAUSE SHE LIVES IN AKRON WITH MY EX-WIFE.

WELL, YOU JUST MAKE YOURSELF AT HOME, CAROL.

WHOOEE, HONEY! WILL YA LOOKIT ALL THOSE PRESENTS UNDER THE TREE?!

I'M JUST VISITING MY DADDY FOR CHRISTMAS, THEN I GOTTA GO BACK.

CLAUDE... WITH A LITTLE GIRL? WHO'D HAVE THUNK IT? SHE SEEMS LIKE A NICE KID-- KINDA DEPRESSED, THOUGH.



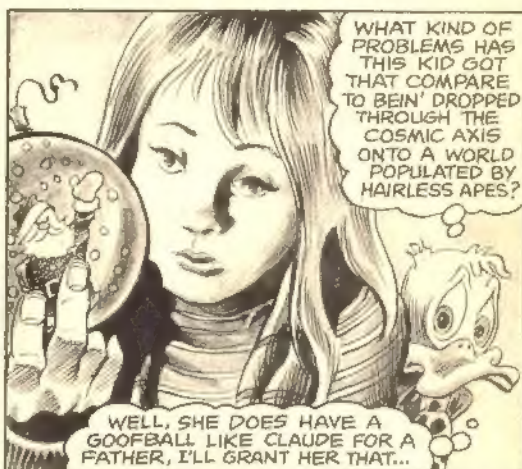
AS THE FESTIVITIES PROGRESS, HOWARD'S INITIAL OBSERVATION REGARDING CAROL SEEMS BORNE OUT...

VERY DEPRESSED... OR VERY SHY! SHE'S BEEN STAYIN' ALOOF ALL NIGHT, NOT JOININ' IN THE FUN AT ALL.



HMMM. NOW THAT I THINK OF IT, NEITHER HAVE I!

BUT HECK! I GOT A RIGHT TO BROOD! THIS AIN'T MY CHRISTMAS--IT AIN'T EVEN MY WORLD!



WHAT KIND OF PROBLEMS HAS THIS KID GOT THAT COMPARE TO BEIN' DROPPED THROUGH THE COSMIC AXIS ONTO A WORLD POPULATED BY HAIRLESS APES?

WELL, SHE DOES HAVE A GOOFBALL LIKE CLAUDE FOR A FATHER, I'LL GRANT HER THAT...



THEN...

FRIENDS, FELLOW WORKERS-- I'VE A FEW WORDS I'D LIKE TO SAY! WE'VE ALL BEEN THROUGH A LOT TOGETHER, INCLUDING THE TRIALS AND TRAVAILS OF EARNING A LIVING IN CLEVELAND...

ZZZZZZZZ

BUT WE'VE COME THROUGH IT ALL MORE THAN JUST FRIENDS! WE'RE A FAMILY!



SO I'D LIKE TO PROPOSE A TOAST-- TO THE FUTURE, AND TO US!

I'LL SECOND THAT ONE, BOSS!

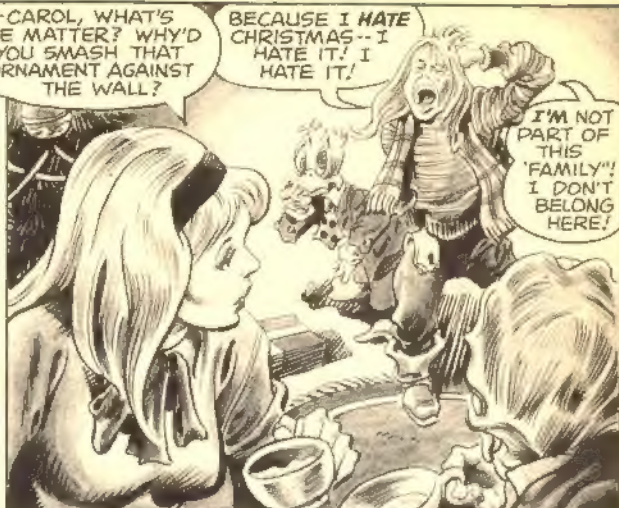
AND I'D JUST LIKE TO ADD: MERRY CHRISTMAS!



C-CAROL, WHAT'S THE MATTER? WHY'D YOU SMASH THAT ORNAMENT AGAINST THE WALL?

BECAUSE I HATE CHRISTMAS-- I HATE IT! I HATE IT!

I'M NOT PART OF THIS 'FAMILY'! I DON'T BELONG HERE!



CAROL, HONEY-- WAIT!

NO! I HATE CHRISTMAS, AND MOST OF ALL, DADDY--



--I HATE YOU!

SLAM

C--CAROL...??



UH, 'SCUSE ME, FOLKS! I-I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S COME OVER HER! I-I'LL JUST GO DOWN AN' BRING HER BACK...

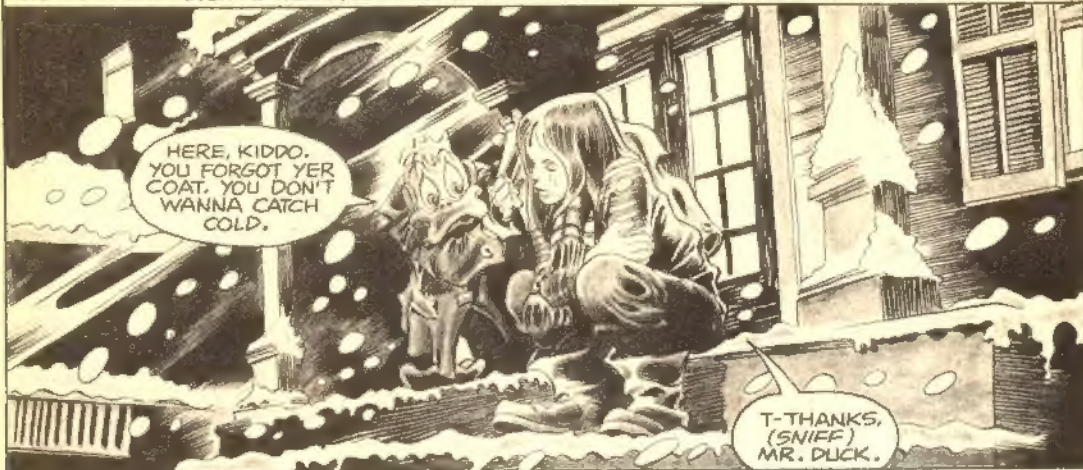


LEMME GO AFTER THE KID, CLAUDE-- I NEED A WALK, ANYWAY!

HUH? BUT...WELL, OKAY, HOWIE!

TAKE CAROL'S COAT, DUCKY!

EMERGING OUT ONTO THE FRONT PORCH, HOWARD THE DUCK FINDS THE DISCONSOLATE CAROL SHIVERING WITH COLD EVEN AS HER EYES WISTFULLY TRACE THE PATTERNS MADE BY GENTLY FALLING SNOW...



THE PHONINESS OF IT IS WHAT BUGS ME, MR. DUCK--THE PHONINESS OF *EVERYTHING!* EVERYBODY PRETENDING CHRISTMAS IS SO MUCH BETTER THAN EVERY OTHER DAY! IT'S NOT! IF PEOPLE REALLY LOVED EACH OTHER, THEY'D DO IT 365 DAYS OF THE YEAR--NOT JUST ON CHRISTMAS!

HECK, FROM WHAT I'VE SEEN, 1/365 TH AIN'T SUCH A BAD AVERAGE FOR YOU HUMANS.

BUT YOU'RE NOT TALKIN' ABOUT PEOPLE IN GENERAL ARE YA, KIDDO?

YOU'RE REALLY TALKIN' ABOUT YOUR FOLKS, RIGHT?

(SNIFF) YES, MR. DUCK! T-HEY SPLIT UP WHEN I WAS NINE-- ON CHRISTMAS DAY! THAT'S WHY I HATE CHRISTMAS!

IS EVERYTHING SO PHONY WHERE YOU COME FROM, MR. DUCK?

CALL ME HOWARD. PHONY? CHRISTMAS, YA MEAN? GEE, IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME SINCE I THOUGHT ABOUT CHRISTMAS BACK HOME...

**DUCK
WORLD**

GIDDYAP-GIDDYAP-GIDDYAP-YAP-YAP... HI-YO, SILVER!

HMM. IT APPEARS LITTLE HOWARD IS ENJOYING THIS CHRISTMAS, MOTHER.

YOU'RE SO RIGHT, DADDY DEAREST.

"YEAH, THAT WAS A GOOD CHRISTMAS! MOM AN' DAD LOVED ME, AN' I DIDN'T HAVETA SHARE 'EM WITH ANYBODY."

"THAT DIDN'T LAST LONG, THOUGH!"

WAH! HOWARD TOOK MY CHOO-CHOO!

SON, WHAT'S COME OVER YOU? PUT DOWN YOUR BROTHER'S TOY! YOU'RE TOO OLD TO...

TOO OLD TO GET ANYTHING FOR CHRISTMAS BUT BOOKS AN' UNDERWEAR?!

HOWARD, STOP YOUR INFANTILE TEMPER TANTRUM THIS INSTANT! YOU'RE UPSETTING YOUR SISTER!



I CAN STILL RECALL
THE LECTURE ON
"CHRISTMAS SPIRIT"
MY OLD MAN GAVE ME
--EVER TIME I SIT
DOWN, THAT IS. BUT I
WAS ACTIN' LIKE A
SPOILED BRAT. I GUESS
I JUST COULDN'T STAND
SHARIN' MY FOLKS'
AFFECTIONS WITH
MY SIBLINGS.

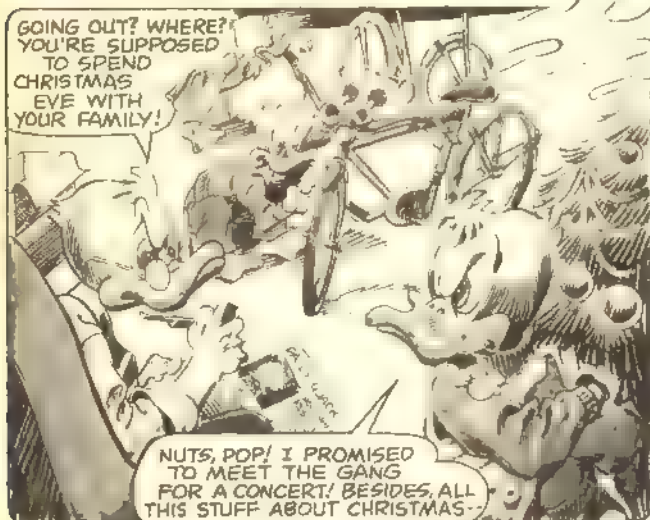
AT LEAST YOU
HAD FOLKS WHO
LOVED YOU.

I'M SURE CLAUDE
AN' YOUR MOM LOVE
YOU, KIDDO! IT'S EACH
OTHER THEY DON'T LIKE.



SPARE ME, HUH, HOWARD? I'M
TWELVE. I KNOW WHERE IT'S
AT. AND IF MY DADDY SENT
YOU OUT TO GIVE ME A PEP-
TALK...

HE DIDN'T, CAROL. I
WAS FEELIN' KINDA BLUE
MYSELF, REMEMBERIN' BACK
WHEN I WAS A TEENAGER..



GOING OUT? WHERE?
YOU'RE SUPPOSED
TO SPEND
CHRISTMAS
EVE WITH
YOUR FAMILY!

NUTS, POP! I PROMISED
TO MEET THE GANG
FOR A CONCERT! BESIDES, ALL
THIS STUFF ABOUT CHRISTMAS--



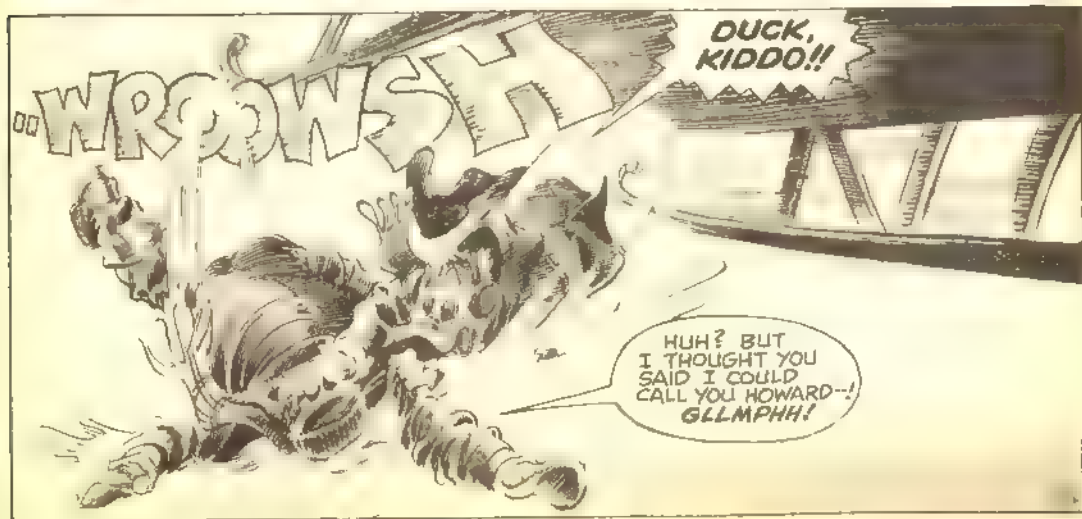
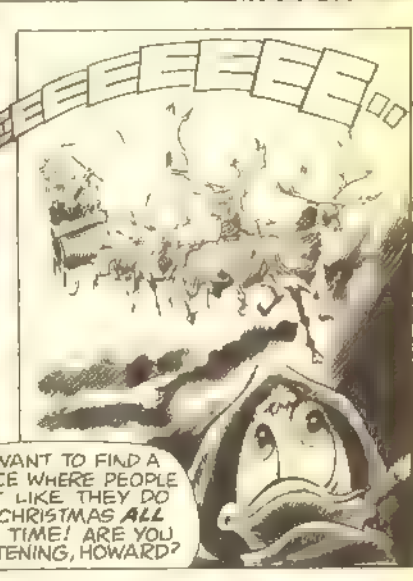
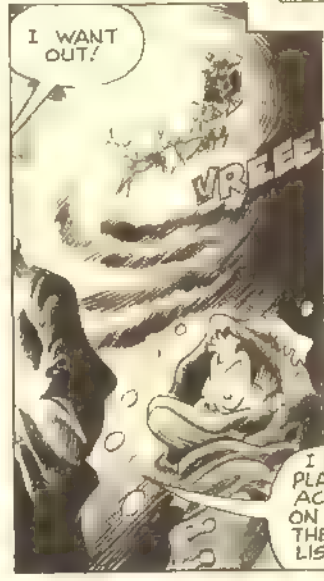
--IS
NOTHING
BLT
NUMBUG!

"YEAH, I WAS YOUNG,
COCKY! I KNEW WHAT
IT WAS ALL ABOUT!"



CHRISTMAS! BAH! NUTHIN' BUT
PHONY COMMERCIALISM! LOOKIT
THESE BOZOS THINKIN' THEY CAN
BUY HAPPINESS OVER THE COUNTER
AN' HAVE IT GIFT-WRAPPED!

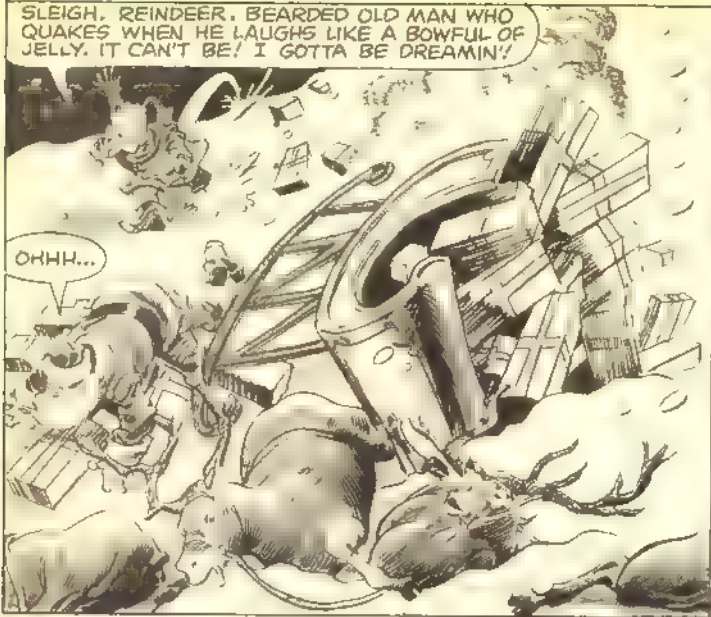
WHAT A
BUNCH OF
SLUCKERS!





*A CITY IN SOUTH POLAND,
ON THE VISTULA. POPULA-
TION: 500,000. ALSO
SPELLED, CRACOW. -- YOU-
KNOW WHO

LIKE A DECIMATED DC-10, THE REINDEER-DRAWN
SLEIGH FALTERS... THEN NOSEDIVES INTO THE
ALABASTER BLANKET OF SNOW BELOW!



SLEIGH. REINDEER. BEARDED OLD MAN WHO QUAKES WHEN HE LAUGHS LIKE A BOWFUL OF JELLY. IT CAN'T BE! I GOTTA BE DREAMIN'!

OH...
OH...
OH...



YOU! DRIVER! WHAT ARE YOU, DRUNK? YOU ALMOST KILLED US! WHY DON'T YOU WATCH WHERE YOU'RE DRIVING THAT SLEIGH?! WHAT'S YOUR NAME?

CLAUS.

NATCHERLY, YOU GOT A LICENSE?



FOR A SLEIGH? THAT'S SILLY!

SO'S YOUR BEARD! YOU'RE LOSIN' IT!

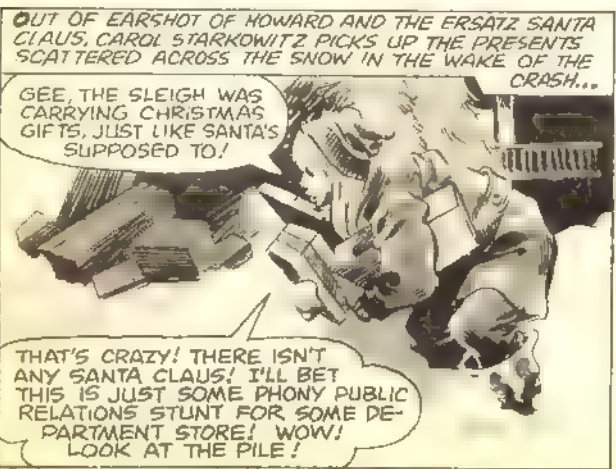
HEY! YOU'RE A FRAUD, POPS. I SHOULD HAVE YOU LOCKED UP FOR FLYING WHILE INTOXICATED...



BUT, WAIT A MINUTE! YOU WERE FLYIN' WEREN'T YOU?

WHY, YES, UNTIL A FEW SECONDS AGO!

PUT YOUR BEARD BACK ON, POPS! I GOT AN IDEA. I WON'T REPORT YOU--IF YOU HELP ME GET A CERTAIN TWELVE YEAR OLD TO BELIEVE IN CHRISTMAS!



OUT OF EARSHOT OF HOWARD AND THE ERSATZ SANTA CLAUS, CAROL STARKOWITZ PICKS UP THE PRESENTS SCATTERED ACROSS THE SNOW IN THE WAKE OF THE CRASH...

GEE, THE SLEIGH WAS CARRYING CHRISTMAS GIFTS, JUST LIKE SANTA'S SUPPOSED TO!

THAT'S CRAZY! THERE ISN'T ANY SANTA CLAUS! I'LL BET THIS IS JUST SOME PHONY PUBLIC RELATIONS STUNT FOR SOME DEPARTMENT STORE! WOW! LOOK AT THE PILE!



BUT, NO SOONER HAS CAROL LIFTED THE THE UPPERMOST PARCEL, THAN...

HI!

GOSH! A-A-A-A...

HOW ABOUT ELF? IT'S SO APPROPRIATE, DON'T YOU THINK?



F FOR REAL?
AN HONEST-TO
GOODNESS
REAL LIVE
ELF?!

OR FAIRY, IF YOU WISH,
THAT'S WHAT WE WERE
KNOWN AS DOWN IN
FLORIDA WHERE I ORIGI-
NALLY HAIL FROM-- BUT
SOME BLAMED WOMAN
MADE THE TERM UNPOP-
ULAR! SO ELF, IF YOU
PLEASE, MISS.

SO THERE
YOU ARE,
SUNQUIST!
THIS IS
ANOTHER
FINE MESS
YOU'VE
GOTTEN ME
INTO!

A MIDGET
WHO THINKS
HE'S AN ELF?
WELL, THAT'LL
MAKE THINGS
BELIEVABLE
TO CAROL!

'SCUSE ME,
MISS. DUTY
CALLS.



LOOK AT THIS MESS, SUNQUIST!
HALF OUR DELIVERIES YET TO
BE MADE, AND WE'RE STRANDED!
AND IN CLEVELAND, OF
ALL PLACES!

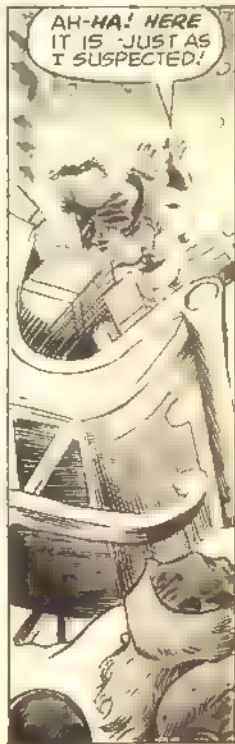
HOWARD,
DO YOU KNOW
WHO *THAT* IS?!

YEAH, A FOUR-
STAR PHONY BUT
HE'S PLAYIN HIS
PART LIKE A BARRY
MORE! I THINK
WE'LL TAG ALONG
AND FIND OUT
WHAT'S UP!

PEACE, AGED FRIEND!
DON'T GET YOUR
JAWS IN AN UPROAR! WE
MUST DISCOVER THE REASON FOR
OUR OVERLY-RAPID DESCENT!



SAY, AMH!
BLITZEN, THAT'S
MY GIRL! NO,
THE TROUBLE'S
NOT HERE!



AH-HA! HERE
IT IS JUST AS
I SUSPECTED!

WE'RE
OUT OF
GAS!

BUT I FILLED UP
BEFORE LEAVING
THE POLE-- I'M
SURE OF IT!

SPARE ME THE SOB-STORY,
KRIS! I'VE BEEN TELLING
YOU FOR YEARS TO CUT
YOUR RELIANCE ON
FOSSIL FUELS!

BUT WOULD
YOU LISTEN
TO ME?
NOOOO!

B-BUT I THOUGHT
SANTA'S SLEIGH WAS
SUPPOSED TO BE
PULLED BY FLYING
REINDEERS?

IT WAS--UNTIL THE ASPCA
GOT WIND OF IT! THEY'LL
STILL ALLOW, VIXEN,
BLITZEN AND THE REST
TO SOAR ON AHEAD
ONCE A YEAR...

...BUT
THE
SLEIGH'S
GOT TO
FLY UNDER
ITS OWN
STEAM!

STEAM? AYE, MY SLEIGH USED
TO BE STEAM-DRIVEN, UNTIL THAT
MAN FROM THE OIL COMPANY CON-
VINCED ME TO SWITCH TO HIGH-
OCTANE FUEL!

GASOLINE
USED TO
BE SO
CHEAP!

THOSE DAYS ARE GONE WITH THE WIND
KRIS-- WHICH IS WHAT YOU **SHOULD** BE
USING FOR THESE TRANSWORLD FLIGHTS
OF YOURS-- WIND OR SOLAR POWER!

I'M A SOLAR-POWERED
ELF... BEEN PUSHING A
RETURN TO ALTERNATIVE
ENERGY SOURCES SINCE I
LEFT THE SUNSHINE STATE--

--AND THREW IN MY LOT WITH OLD
KRIS KRINGLE! NOW WE'RE OUT
OF GAS, STUCK IN CLEVELAND
WITH A BATCH OF BROKEN TOYS,
WITH NO WAY TO GET BACK TO THE
NORTH POLE TO REPAIR 'EM
IN TIME FOR CHRISTMAS DELIVERY!

THAT'S
WHAT I CALL
EFFICIENCY,
POPS!

LOOK, I'VE GOT A LITTLE GIRL TO CONVINCE THAT CHRISTMAS AIN'T AS PHONY AS EVERYTHING ELSE IN HER LIFE. IS GAS ALL YOU NEED TO GET THIS SHOW BACK ON THE ROAD?

WHY, YES!

I HAVE MY OWN PUMPS BACK AT THE POLE, BUT WITH GAS-RATIONING IN EFFECT, I DON'T SEE HOW I CAN GET ENOUGH FUEL TO MAKE IT HOME...

I GOT THAT FIGURED OUT!

I WORK FOR THE "TO HACK AND BACK" TAXI COMPANY. OUR PUMPS ARE ONLY A FEW BLOCKS FROM HERE NOW ALL WE GOTTA DO IS FIND A WAY TO GET YOUR SLEIGH TO 'EM!

THUS, A SHORT TIME LATER...

HEAVE
PUFF-PUFF!
HO! HEAVE
PUFF-PUFF!
HO!

THAT'S THE WAY, LADS AND LADY! I CAN SEE HOWARD'S CAB COMPANY UP AHEAD! PULL AND PUSH, FRIENDS, PUSH AND PULL!

IT'D BE A HECK OF A LOT EASIER IF YOU'D CLIMB DOWN OFF THE SLEIGH AND HELP, SUNQUIST!

I'D REALLY LOVE TO, HOWARD.

A CONTRACT? FOR ELVES?

UNFORTUNATELY, MY CONTRACT FORBIDS IT!

OF COURSE, ELVES ARE CONSIDERED AN EXPLOITABLE MINORITY!

ELF AGREEMENT
Elves may offer their good services to human ty in the form of advice or magical assistance if such assistance does not in any way limit human endeavor by causing undue reliance on elfkind.
E. Pluribus Elf

WE HAVE TO PROTECT OURSELVES!

SO, WHILE I'D SINCERELY LIKE TO HELP, I SIMPLY CAN'T ALLOW YOU TO RELY MORE ON MY ASSISTANCE THAN ON YOUR OWN MUSCLE!

OH! I-I'VE SLIPPED ON THE SNOW!

THE SLEIGH!
IT'S GOING OVER THE HILL!

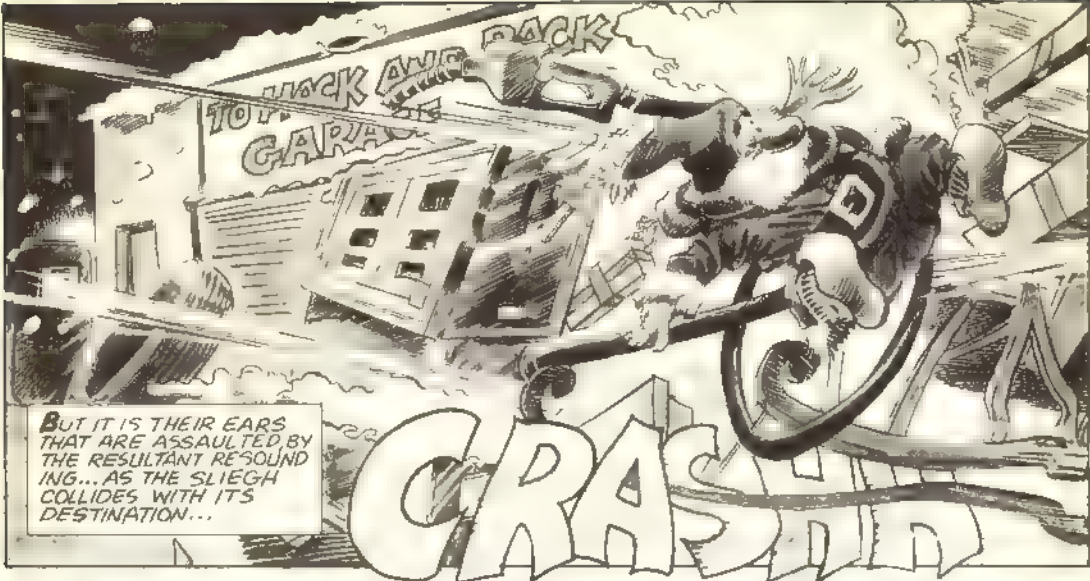
GEE, I'D LIKE TO, SUNQUIST-REALLY! BUT I SIMPLY CAN'T ALLOW YOU TO FEEL A FALSE SENSE OF RELIANCE ON MY HELP!

WHAT--? WE'RE PICKING UP SPEED!
STOP PUSHING!
CAROL! SANTA!
HOWARD! HELP ME STOP THIS THING!

BESIDES, SAVING SMAUG ELVES ISN'T IN MY CONTRACT!

OH POOR SUNQUIST!
I-I CAN'T LOOK!

HELPLESS TO AID THE HURLING SUNQUIST, CAROL AND SANTA AVERT THEIR GAZE.



BUT IT IS THEIR EARS
THAT ARE ASSAULTED BY
THE RESULTANT RE-SOUND-
ING... AS THE SLIEGH
COLLIDES WITH ITS
DESTINATION...

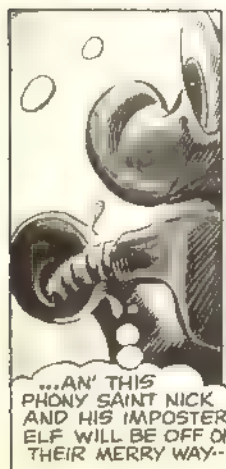


OH, SUNQUIST
--YOU'RE
HURT!

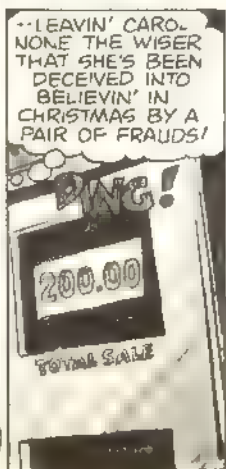
BUT AT
LEAST THE
GAS PUMPS
SURVIVED THE
IMPACT.



NOW ALL WE
GOTTA DO IS
REFUEL
SANTA'S
SLEIGH...



...AN' THIS
PHONY SAINT NICK
AND HIS IMPOSTER
ELF WILL BE OFF ON
THEIR MERRY WAY--

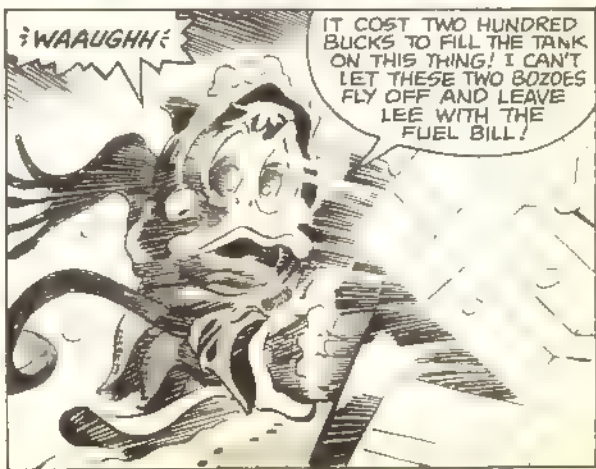


--LEAVIN' CAROL
NONE THE WISER
THAT SHE'S BEEN
DECEIVED INTO
BELIEVIN' IN
CHRISTMAS BY A
PAIR OF FRAUDS!

PING!

200.00

TOTAL SALE



!WAAUGHH!

IT COST TWO HUNDRED
BUCKS TO FILL THE TANK
ON THIS THING! I CAN'T
LET THESE TWO BOZES
FLY OFF AND LEAVE
LEE WITH THE
FUEL BILL!

FEAR NOT, FRIEND HOWARD! WE WOULDN'T DREAM OF REPAYING THE KINDNESS YOU HAVE SHOWN US BY LEAVING YOU IN THE LURCH! WOULD WE, SUNQUIST?

HARD TO TELL WITH DREAMS, KRIS..

OH, HOWARD! LOOK! LOOK! ISN'T IT ABSOLUTELY WONDERFUL!

YAH!

I'M ALMOST BEGINNIN' TO BELIEVE IN IT MYSELF!

NOW, I NEVER CARRY CASH ON ME, HOWARD--TOO DANGEROUS BUT I'D BE DELIGHTED IF YOU AND CAROL WOULD ACCOMPANY ME BACK TO MY WORKSHOP

ONCE THERE I CAN REPAY YOU IN FULL.

'WAACK: GO WITH YA TO THE NORTH POLE, YA MEAN? NO WAY!

OH, HOWARD--IT MUST BE THE MOST WONDERFUL PLACE IN THE WORLD!

THIS AIN'T TURNIN' OUT RIGHT!

IF WE TAG ALONG WITH THESE TWO GONZOES, CAROL'S GONNA REALIZE SOONER OR LATER THAT THEY'RE PHONIES!

BUT IF WE DON'T, SHE'S GONNA HATE ME--AN' MAYBE LOSE ALL FAITH IN CHRISTMAS FOREVER! NUTS!

BUT MAYBE THIS PSEUDO-SANTA DOES HAVE A WORKSHOP SOMEWHERE--SOMEPLACE TO MAINTAIN THE ILLUSION. I GOTTA CHANCE IT!



AWRIGHT, CLAUIS - WE'LL TAG ALONG FOR THE RIDE!

OH, HOWARD, THANK YOU! I LOVE YOU!

YEAH. I JUST HOPE YOU FEEL THE SAME WHEN THIS FIASCO IS OVER!



HI YO, SILVER-- AWAY!

THUS, SECONDS LATER, OUR FAMOUS FOWL SITS BESIDE SUNQUIST, THE SOLAR-POWERED ELF, AS SANTA'S SLEIGH RISES HIGH INTO THE SNOW FILLED SKY OVER CLEVELAND, USA!

WOOSH

BESIDE SANTA SITS CAROL STARKOWITZ, AS MANY STARS GLITTERING IN HER EYES AS IN THE HEAVENS--A LITTLE GIRL FORCED BY EVENTS TO GROW UP FAR TOO SOON.

A CHILD LIVING A CHILDHOOD FANTASY FOR THE FIRST TIME IN HER LIFE!



A JET-PROPELLED SLEIGH! I THINK I'M GONNA BE AIRSICK!

ARE WE REALLY GOING TO THE NORTH POLE, SANTA?

THAT'S RIGHT, DOROT-- ER - I MEAN, CAROL! JUST THINK PLEASANT THOUGHTS ABOUT CHRISTMAS AND, IN NO TIME AT ALL, WE'LL HAVE ARRIVED AT



**THE
NORTH
POLE!**

I-I DON'T BELIEVE IT! I WAS WATCHIN' THE ODOMETER! THERE WAS NO WAY THE OLD GEEZER COULDA FAKED THE MILEAGE!

WE ARE AT THE **NORTH POLE!** AND, THERE BELOW US! IT'S **SANTA'S WORK-SHOP!** IT REALLY EXISTS!

WAAUGHH!

SLEIGHBELLS JINGLING, THE FLYING REIN-DEER BANK AND GLIDE DOWN TOWARDS HOME.

HOMES BEING A STORYBOOK CASTLE SURROUNDED BY A CHEERFUL ALPINE VILLAGE NESTLED IN THE ARCTIC SNOWS BELOW!

TRY AS HE MIGHT, THE ASTONISHED HOWARD CAN NO MORE DENY ITS EXISTENCE THAN HE COULD DENY THAT HE IS A DUCK!

A FACT OF LIFE THAT HAS GOTTEN HIM INTO TROUBLE MORE THAN ONCE!

BUT THE UNREALITY OF THIS ENVIRONMENT DOES NOT STOP WITH THE ALPINE ARCHITECTURE! NO, FOR THIS WORKSHOP AT THE TOP OF THE WORLD IS POPULATED BY BEINGS AS FANTASTICALLY FORMED AS HOWARD HIMSELF. OFTIMES MUST SEEM TO THE HAIRLESS APES CURRENTLY IN EVOLUTIONARY ASCENDANCE ON THIS DUST-MOTE OF A WORLD WE CALL EARTH!

DARLING? DEAREST? MRS. CLAUS?
AHEM! WE--AH--WE'RE HOME SOME-
WHAT EARLIER THAN EXPECTED,
MY LOVE!

GEE! LOOKIT ALL
THE TOYS--AND
THEY'RE ALIVE!

OF COURSE
THEY'RE ALIVE!
THEY WERE
MADE WITH
ELF
MAGIC!

HOMMINA
HOMMINA-
HAA...

SANTA'S
HOME.

NOW HE'LL
HEAR THE
BAD NEWS!

OH,
WOE!
WOE!

WHY, MY DEAR,
WHAT'S IT?
WHAT'S WRONG?

WHY ARE YOU AND THE TOYS SITTING
OUT HERE IN THE SNOW?

WE'VE (SOB) BEEN
THROWN OUT, KRIS DEAR-
EST! WHILE YOU WERE
GONE ONE OF YOUR WORK-
SHOP MANAGERS LED A REVOLT!

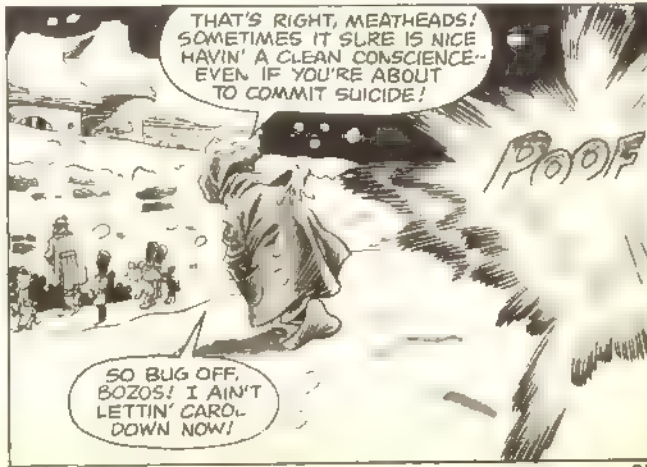
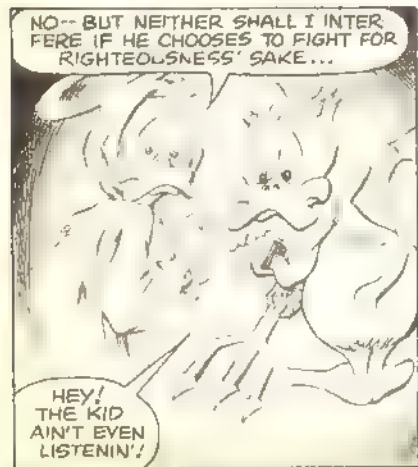
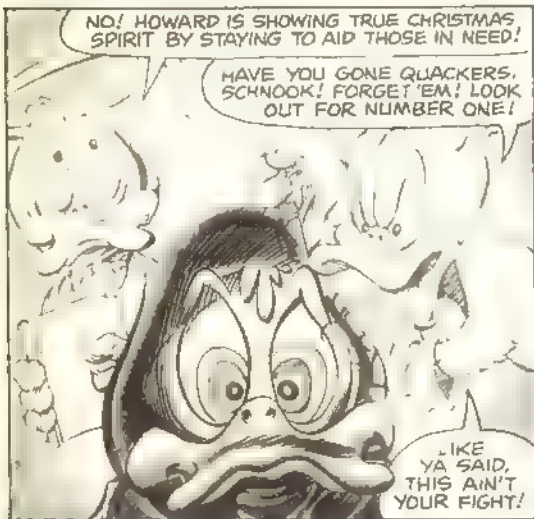
THEY TOOK OVER THE TOY
SHOPS - THREW OUT EVERY-
ONE WHO DARED CHALLENGE
THEM! THEY'VE HIJACKED
CHRISTMAS RIGHT OUT
FROM UNDER YOU!


NO!

MY STARS!

WAAUGH~








THERE IS ONLY ONE OF
MY WORKSHOP MANAGERS
SO HEINOUS AS TO
HAVE CONCEIVED THIS
CRIME--THE DIRECTOR
OF MY FUN 'N' GAMES
DEPARTMENT!

PINBALL LIZARD, THIS
IS SANTA CLAUS! I DEM-
AND ENTRANCE TO MY
WORKSHOP AT ONCE!




FOLL FIEND! WAS IT FOR THIS
THAT I HEADED YOUR PAROLE
OFFICER AND GAVE YOU
A JOB?


YOU
SSSHOULD
HAVE SSSSEEN
THROUGH MY
TRICKSSS.

NOW I'M ON
THE INSSSIDE--
AND YOU'RE
LOCKED OUT! YOUR
ELVESSS WILL OBEY
ME...OR ELSSSE!

BEWARE, PINBALL LIZARD! YOU AND YOUR
INSIDIOUS TROLLS MAY HAVE THE UPPER
HAND NOW, BUT ELF MAGIC MAY NEVER
BE TURNED TO EVIL!



NOT
WITHOUT DIRE
CONSEQUENCES,
ANYWAY!

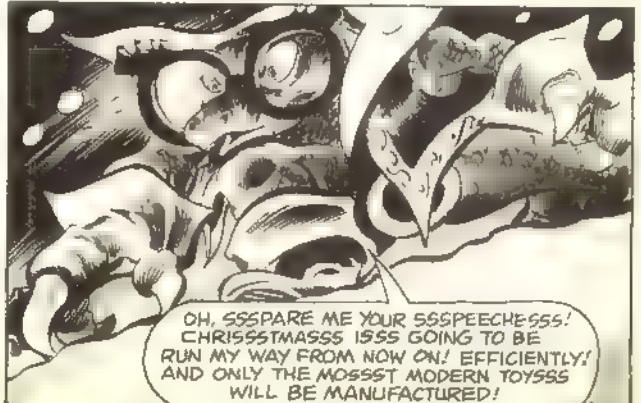


DEMAND AWAY,
SSSANTA CLAUSSSS!
I AM DEAF, DUMB AND
BLIND TO YOUR INEFFECTU-
AL PLEASSS! I AM IN
COMMAND OF THE
TOYSSSSSHOP NOW...

...AND SSSOON
I WILL CONTROL
CHRISSTMASSSS
ITSSSELF!

HAH-HAH!
GNORT!

LOOKIT
THEM ELVES
HOP!



OH, SSSPARE ME YOUR SSSPEECHSSS!
CHRISSTMASSSS ISSS GOING TO BE
RUN MY WAY FROM NOW ON! EFFICIENTLY!
AND ONLY THE MOSSST MODERN TOYSSS
WILL BE MANUFACTURED!

SSSO GO SSSLUK
SSSNOW, SSSANTA
C.LAUSSS

CHRISSTMASSE
BELONGSSS TO THE
SSSTRONG!

INGRATE! POLTROON!
THANKLESS
UNAPPRECIATIVE
SNAKE-IN-THE GRASS

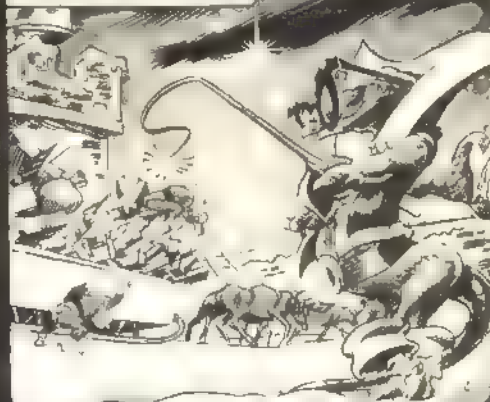
SAVE YOUR
BREATH,
KRIS. I THINK
OLD SLIME-
SOCKS GOT
THE
MESSAGE.

WHAT ARE WE TO DO, SUNQUIST?
YOU ELF MAGIC IS GOOD FOR
MAKING TOYS, EMPOWERING
REINDEER TO FLY AND GETTING
ME UP AND DOWN CHIMNEYS...

...BUT THIS
IS WAR!

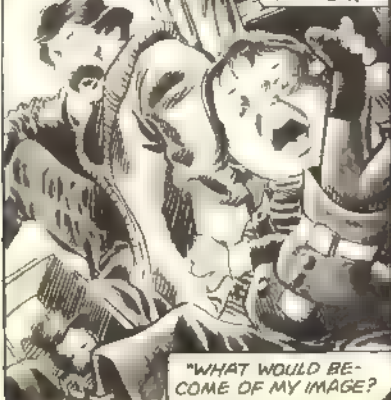


"THEN THAT MASS OF MASS PRODUCED TOYS WILL
BE LOADED ON AN ENLARGED SLEIGH! MY POOR
REINDEER WILL BE FORCED TO HAUL QUANTITY
INSTEAD OF QUALITY!"

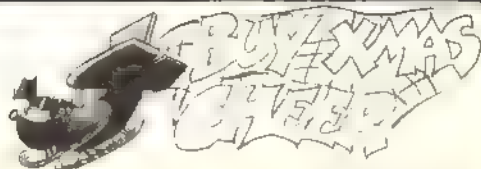


WHY, AT THIS MOMENT, PINBALL LIZARDS TROLL CO-
HORTS ARE FORCING MY ASSISTANTS TO PRODUCE TOYS
ON A GRUELING INHUMAN ASSEMBLY LINE!

"AND THE RESULT WILL BE SHODDY
MERCHANDISE COMING APART IN THE
HANDS OF UNHAPPY CHILDREN
WHEREVER I'VE BEEN CONTRACTED TO
DELIVER.



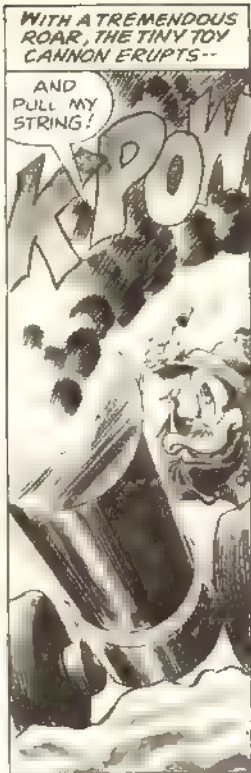
"WHAT WOULD BE-
COME OF MY IMAGE?"



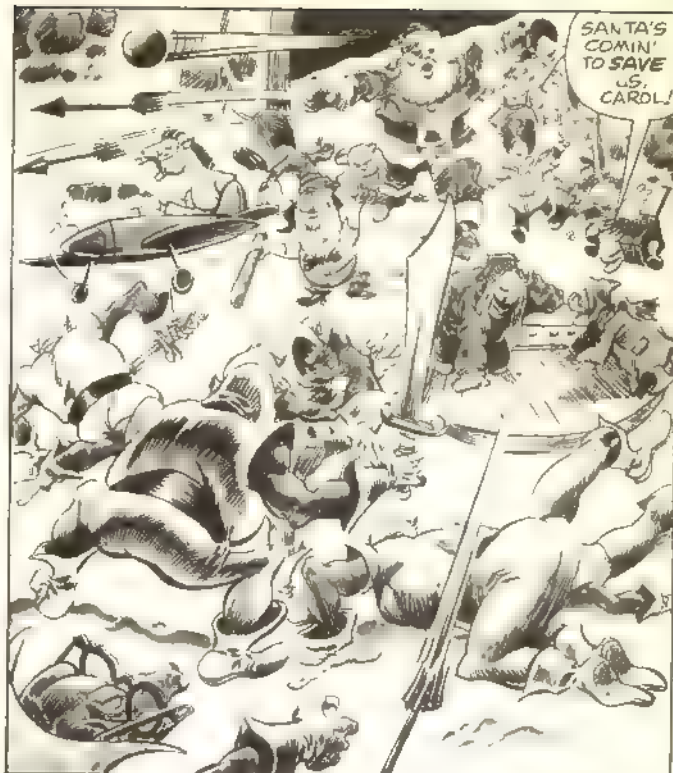
"BUT, DISGRACEFUL
THOUGH THE PRODUCT
ITSELF MAY BE, PEOPLE'LL
SWALLOW IT HOOK-LINE-
AND-SINKER, UNABLE TO
RESIST THE ADVERTISING
BLITZ ACCOMPANYING
IT!"

PINBALL'S
ALWAYS
HATED THE
FACT THAT
WE'RE
BASICALLY
A VERY
SMALL OUT-
SET WITH A
HUGE REP-
UTATION!"





BUT, EVEN AS THE
ENEMY ADVANCES...



"THE TOYS ARE ATTACKING!"



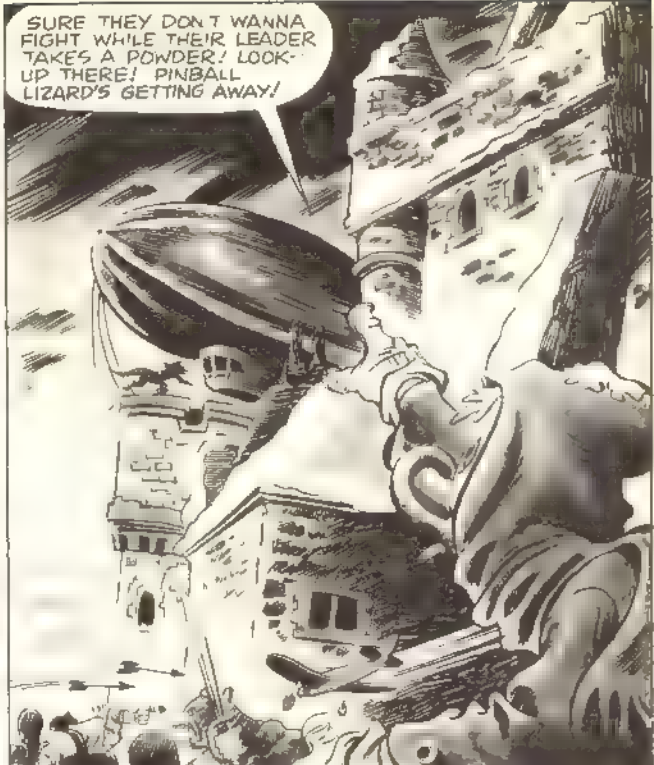
AH, JUST LIKE SOMETHING OUT OF KILLING! BLOOD! GUTS! GORE!

IT'S MORE LIKE SPRINGS AND SAWDUST, SLINGQUIST! OH, MY POOR TOYS!



STILL, THEY SEEM TO BE WINNING, SANTA! THE TROLLS ARE GIVING UP!

SURE THEY DON'T WANNA FIGHT WHILE THEIR LEADER TAKES A POWDER! LOOK UP THERE! PINBALL LIZARD'S GETTING AWAY!

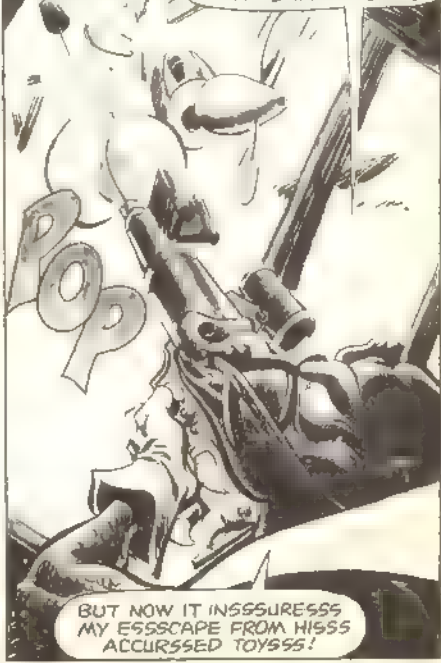


LIKE ENRAGED WASPS, THE TERRIBLE TOYS RISE AND GIVE CHASE TO THE INTRUDER WHO DARED DISTURB THEIR NEST!



BUT, MOORING LINES SEVERED, THE DIRIGIBLE ASCENDS INTO THE ARCTIC SKY!

HA-HA-HA! SSSSANTA KEPT THIS BALLOON ASSS A MEANSSSS OF TRANSSSS PORTATION SSSSHOULD HISSSS SSSSLEIGH EVER BREAK DOWN!



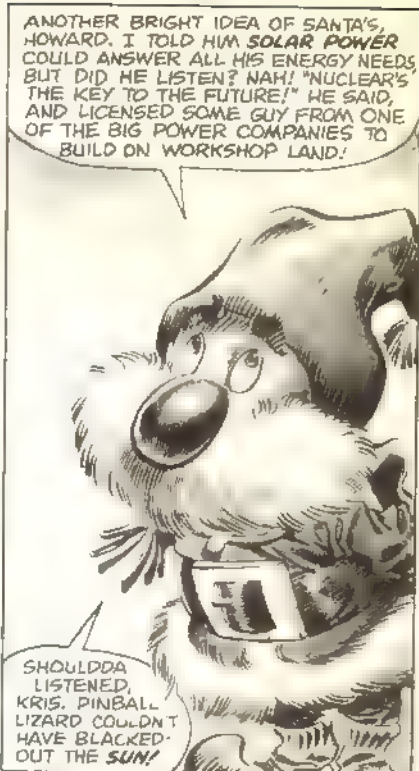
BUT NOW IT INSSSSURESSS MY ESSSSCAPE FROM HISSSS ACCURSSSED TOYSSSS!



I'VE RISSEN OUT OF RANGE OF YOUR INSSPID TOYSSS, CLAUSSS! YOU MAY HAVE RECAPTURED YOUR TOYSSSHOP BUT I CAN SSSTILL WIN BY TAKING CONTROL OF THE NORTH POLE NUCLEAR POWER PLANT AND SSSHUTTING YOU DOWN FOR GOOD!

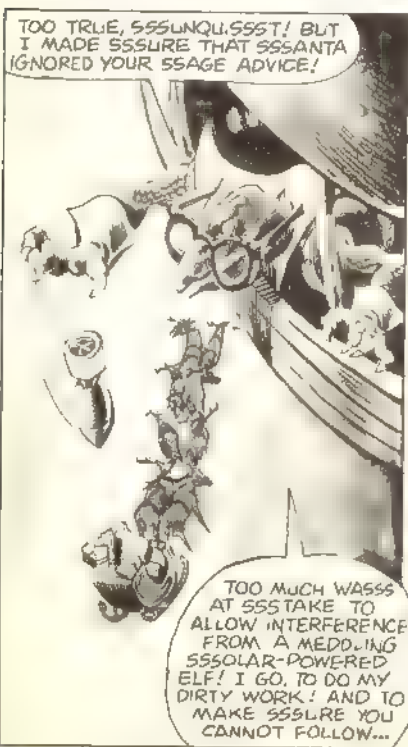
THE FIEND! WITHOUT THAT PLANT MY WORKSHOP WILL GRIND TO A HALT!

NUCLEAR POWER? HERE AT THE NORTH POLE??



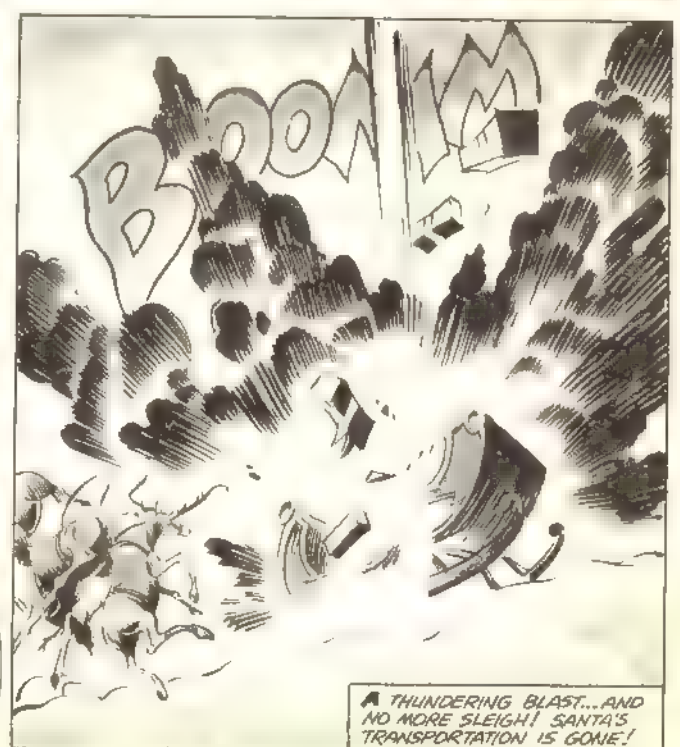
ANOTHER BRIGHT IDEA OF SANTA'S HOWARD. I TOLD HIM SOLAR POWER COULD ANSWER ALL HIS ENERGY NEEDS, BUT DID HE LISTEN? NAH! "NUCLEAR'S THE KEY TO THE FUTURE!" HE SAID, AND LICENSED SOME GUY FROM ONE OF THE BIG POWER COMPANIES TO BUILD ON WORKSHOP LAND!

SHOULD'DA LISTENED, KRIS. PINBALL LIZARD COULDN'T HAVE BLACKED-OUT THE SUN!



TOO TRUE, SSSUNQU.SSST! BUT I MADE SSSURE THAT SSSANTA IGNORED YOUR SSAGE ADVICE!

TOO MUCH WASSS AT SSSTAKE TO ALLOW INTERFERENCE FROM A MEDDING SSSOLAR-POWERED ELF! I GO, TO DO MY DIRTY WORK! AND TO MAKE SSSURE YOU CANNOT FOLLOW...



A THUNDERING BLAST...AND NO MORE SLEIGH! SANTA'S TRANSPORTATION IS GONE!



PINBALL
LIZARD'S
LEAVING...

OH, HOWARD, DO
SOMETHING!

TO PULL
THE PLUG ON
THE NORTH
POLE!

WHO ME?
I'M JUST
VISITIN'!



TALK TO
YOUR HOST--
IT'S *HIS*
FAULT ALL
THIS HAP-
PENED TO
BEGIN
WITH!

DON'T BLAME SANTA, HOWARD!
HE PROBABLY DIDN'T KNOW
NUCLEAR ENERGY WAS BAD!

NO, I KNEW
IT MIGHT BE
DANGEROUS.
CARD!



I-I GLESS I JUST THOUGHT THEY'D FIND
SOME WAY TO MAKE IT SAFE, GIVEN TIME!
AND THEN, I OWNED ALL THIS LAND UP HERE;
EVEN IF SOMETHING WENT WRONG, I DIDN'T
THINK ANYONE WOULD BE HURT!

BUT THEN I FOUND
OUT ABOUT...THE
ANTARCTICA SYNDROME!

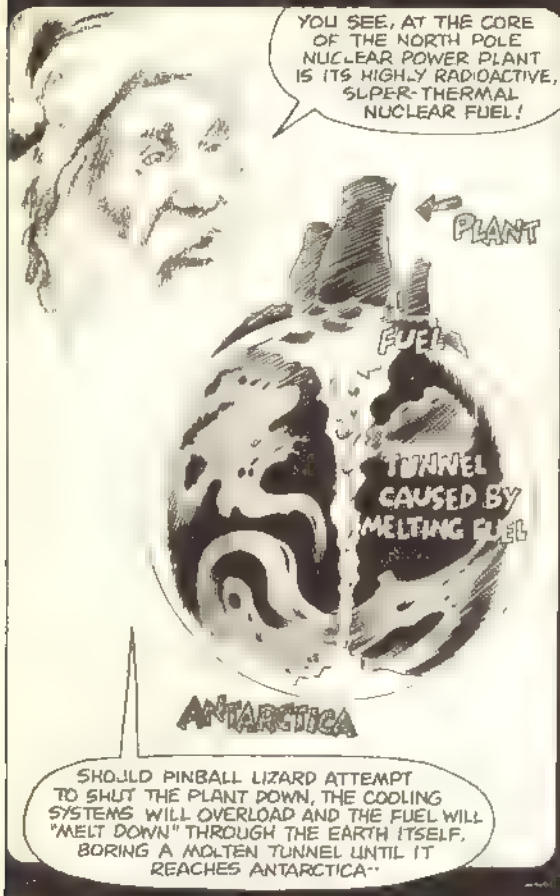


THE (GASP!)
ANTARCTICA SYNDROME!



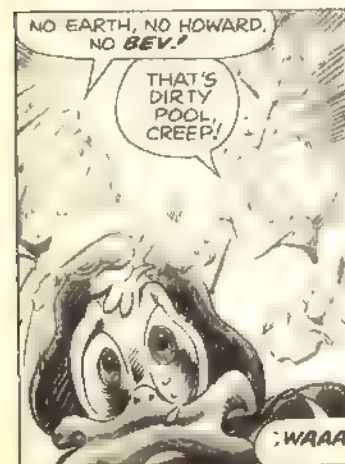
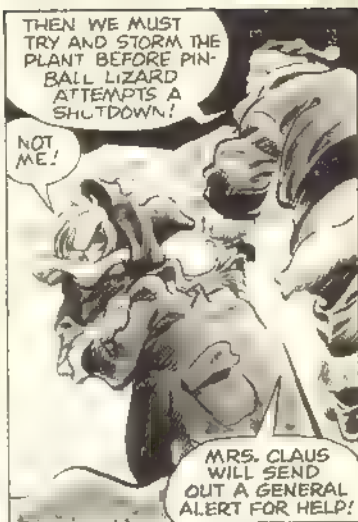
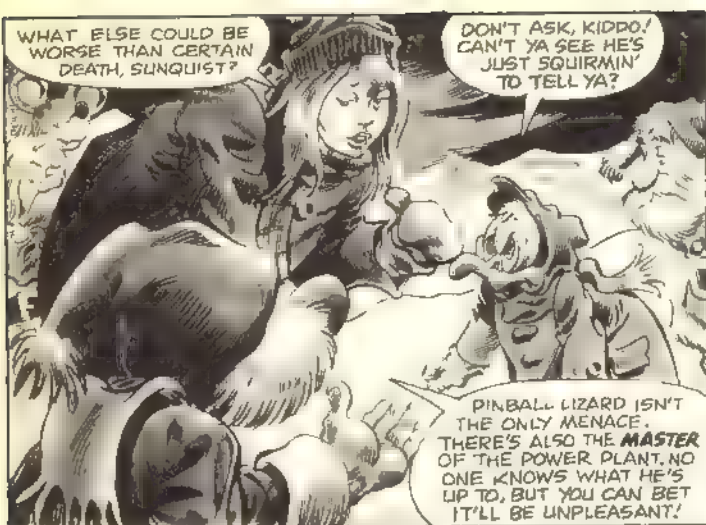
GEE
WHAT'S
THAT??

SOMETHING
TERRIBLE, I'M
AFRAID. LISTEN,
AND I'LL
EXPLAIN...



"-WHERE IT WILL SHOOT OUT THE OTHER END! THEN, LIKE A PUNCTURED GASBAG PROPELLED BY ESCAPING AIR, THE PLANET WILL WHIZ CRAZILY THROUGH SPACE, DEFLATING AND, FINALLY, SELF-DESTRUCTING!"





THUS, JOINING IN THE RAG TAG ARMY TRUDGING ACROSS THE FROZEN WASTES TOWARD THE OMINOUSLY LOOMING TOWERS OF THE NORTH POLE NUCLEAR FACILITY, IS ONE HARRIED BUT HEADSTRONG **HOWARD THE DUCK!**

WAAAAUGH! WE'LL NEVER GET THERE AT THIS RATE!

FEAR NOT, HOWARD! THIS EXPERIENCE HAS TAUGHT ME TO RELY ON NATURAL MODES OF TRANSPORTATION...AND EVEN NOW MRS. CLAU'S RADIO-ALERT IS HAVING THE DESIRED RESULTS! LOOK!

"HELP IS ON THE WAY"

ARE!
ARE!

WOOF!
WOOF!

MUSH,
YOU HUSKIES!

GREETINGS, OLD FRIEND. WE ARE GLAD YOU HAVE REGAINED YOUR SENSES!

YES, CHIEF OLLAKOOK! I SEE NOW THAT I WAS TOO **NASTY!**

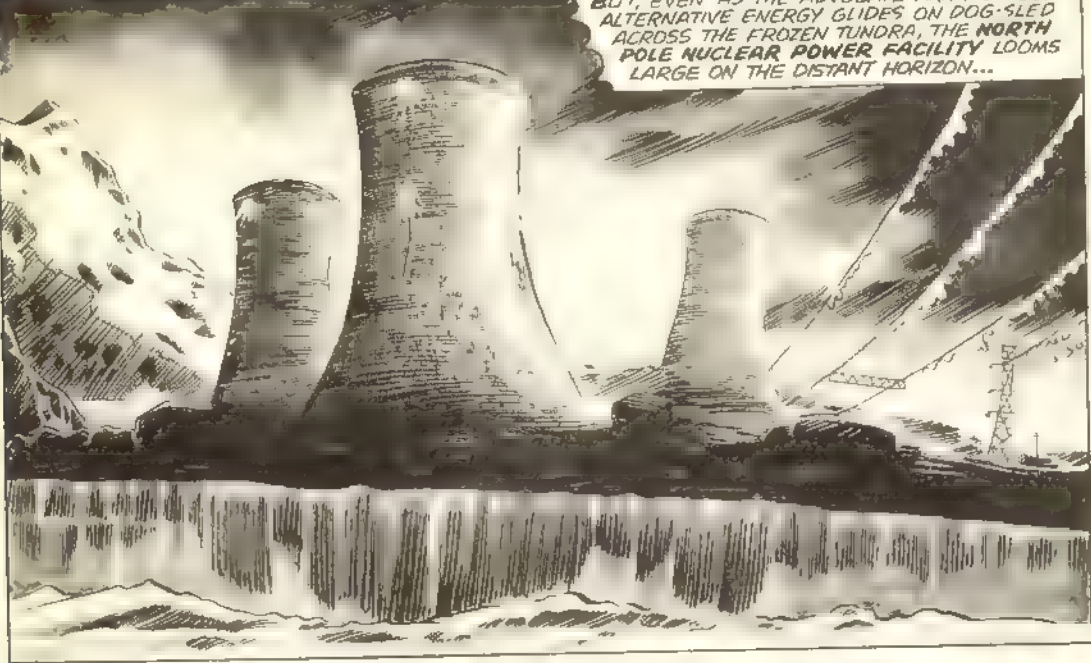
WE WILL HELP YOU DESTROY THIS DEVIL-PLANT, OLD ONE, BEFORE IT DESTROYS US ALL!

KIDDO, LIE TO ME! TELL ME THIS IS ALL A DREAM AN' I'LL WAKE UP BACK IN CLEVELAND!

INDEED! IT HAS LONG BEEN ESTABLISHED FACT THAT ESKIMOS RECEIVE MORE RADIATION FROM NUCLEAR FALLOUT THAN THOSE IN THE TEMPERATE ZONES WHO TRIGGER THE BOMBS AND BUILD THE PLANTS!

ON SECOND THOUGHT, SKIP THE PART ABOUT CLEVELAND!

BUT, EVEN AS THE ADVOCATE ARMY OF "SOFT" ALTERNATIVE ENERGY GLIDES ON DOG-SLED ACROSS THE FROZEN TUNDRA, THE NORTH POLE NUCLEAR POWER FACILITY LOOMS LARGE ON THE DISTANT HORIZON...



WHILE, WITHIN THE SINISTER PILE, DASTARDLY DECISIONS ARE BEING MADE THAT MAY WELL AFFECT US ALL!

YOU HAVE **FAILED** ME, LIZARD! NOW I WILL HAVE TO INTER-
VENE DIRECTLY IN **THE CHRISTMAS CAPER!**



PLEASSSE, MASSSTER!
I TRIED! I REALLY DID! HOW
WASSS I TO KNOW SOME DUCK IN
CLEVELAND WOULD BE SO **FUELISHH**
ASSS TO LEND THAT PERPATETIC
PHILANTHROPISSST THE GASSS
TO GET HOME??

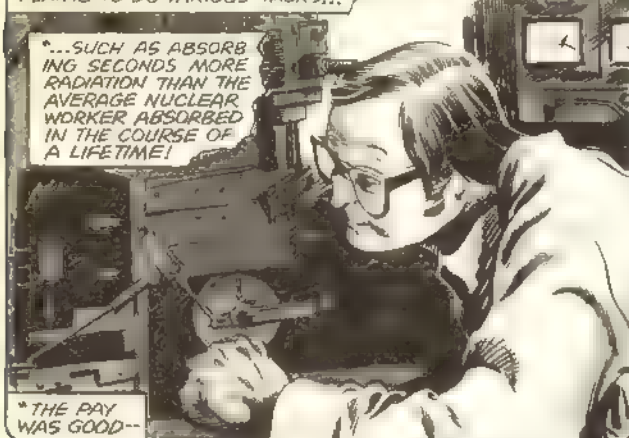
YEAR AFTER YEAR CLAUSSS
CONTINUESSS HISSS SSSILLY
CHARADE ASSS IF HE HAD A
CHARMED LIFE.



"BUT IF I'D LISTENED TO MOTHER, I NEVER WOULD HAVE TAKEN THAT JOB AT THREE MILE ISLAND NUCLEAR FACILITY AS A JUMPER"-- A WORKER HIRED TO ENTER 'HOT' AREAS OF NUCLEAR PLANTS TO DO VARIOUS TASKS...

"...SUCH AS ABSORBING SECONDS MORE RADIATION THAN THE AVERAGE NUCLEAR WORKER ABSORBED IN THE COURSE OF A LIFETIME!

*THE PAY WAS GOOD--



"--BUT THE FRINGE BENEFITS WERE LOUSY!"

D DIZZY' M-MAYBE I SHOULDN'T HAVE WORKED OVER-TIME TODAY!

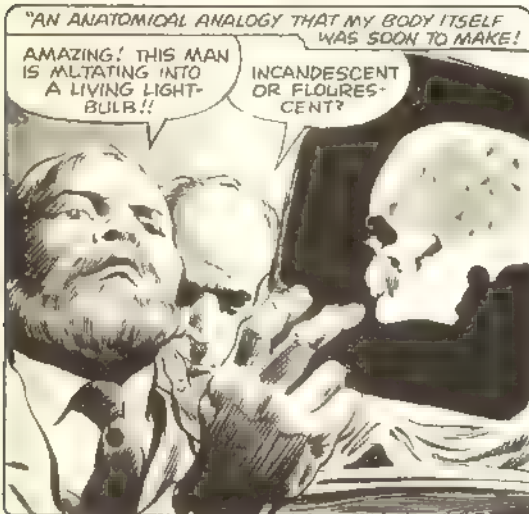
"THAT WAS AN UNDERSTATEMENT! BY THE TIME THEY HAULED ME OUT OF THERE, I WAS GLOWING LIKE A LIGHTBULB!"



"AN ANATOMICAL ANALOGY THAT MY BODY ITSELF WAS SOON TO MAKE!

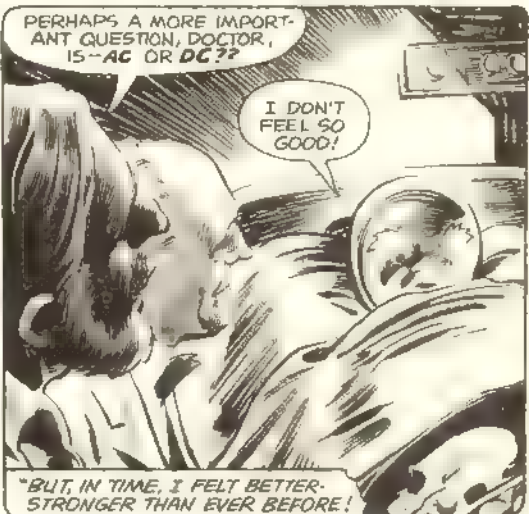
AMAZING! THIS MAN IS MUTATING INTO A LIVING LIGHT-BULB!!

INCANDESCENT OR FLOURES-CENT?



PERHAPS A MORE IMPORTANT QUESTION, DOCTOR, IS--AC OR DC??

I DON'T FEEL SO GOOD!



"BUT, IN TIME, I FELT BETTER--STRONGER THAN EVER BEFORE!"

*YET, MY STRANGENESS MADE OTHERS SHUN ME! MOMMY THAT MAN WAS GLOWING!

Y XMAS TREE

HUSH! HE WAS JUST A LITTLE LIGHT-HEADED!

"THE FOOLS!"



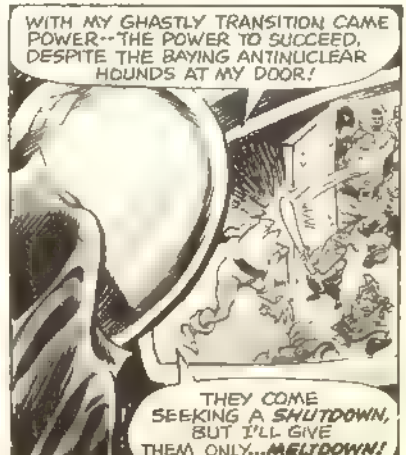
"TAUNT ME, WOULD THEY? I'D STILL THEIR LAUGHTER, BY STEALING AWAY THAT WHICH THEY HELD MOST DEAR..."

"CHRISTMAS!"



WITH MY GHASTLY TRANSITION CAME POWER--THE POWER TO SUCCEED, DESPITE THE BAYING ANTINUCLEAR HOUNDS AT MY DOOR!

THEY COME SEEKING A SHUTDOWN, BUT I'LL GIVE THEM ONLY...MELTDOWN!



MEANWHILE, AT THE MAIN GATE OF NORTH POLE NUKE

WE MUST HURRY IF WE'RE TO ABORT THE ANTARCTICA SYNDROME!

WATCH YOUR WORDS, KRIS!

"ABORT" IS STILL A BUZZWORD IN PADE COUNTY!

LOOK!

YEECCHHH! HORRIBLE, UGLY GHASTLY, EXECRABLE, OUTRAGEOUS, FRIGHTFUL, SHOCKING, HIDEOUS, MUTATED MONSTROSITIES THAT WERE OBVIOUSLY ONCE POOR, INNOCENT SEALS, POLAR BEARS, PENGUINS AND WHALES!

GROWL! WHALE
SHARP! NOISE!

LH, WOULD YOU MIND, REPEATIN' THAT, KIDDO?

SHE SAID WE'RE IN TROUBLE!

AH, THEY HAVE ENCOUNTERED MY METAMORPHOSED BESTIARY! HOW AMUSING IT WILL BE TO OBSERVE THOSE ENVIRONMENTALLY-CONSCIOUS CRETINS RENT ASUNDER BY THE VERY ENDANGERED SPECIES THEY CLAMOR TO SAVE

A BRILLIANT SSSSTROKE, MASSSTER!

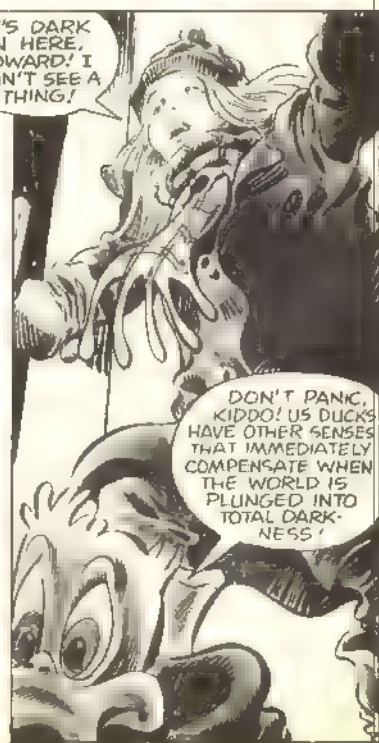
I MUSSET GET BACK IN HISSSS GOOD GRACESSSS...

...BEFORE HE REMEMBERSSS HOW I FAILED HIM!

PINBALL LIZARD SLITHERS OFF TO DO HIS MASTER'S BIDDING BEFORE HIS MASTER BIDS HIM DO IT, WHILE THE EMBATTLED WOULD BE SAVIORS OF CHRISTMASSES YET TO COME WAGE A FIERCE STRUGGLE AGAINST GREEDY KILLERWATT'S MUTANT MENAGERIE!

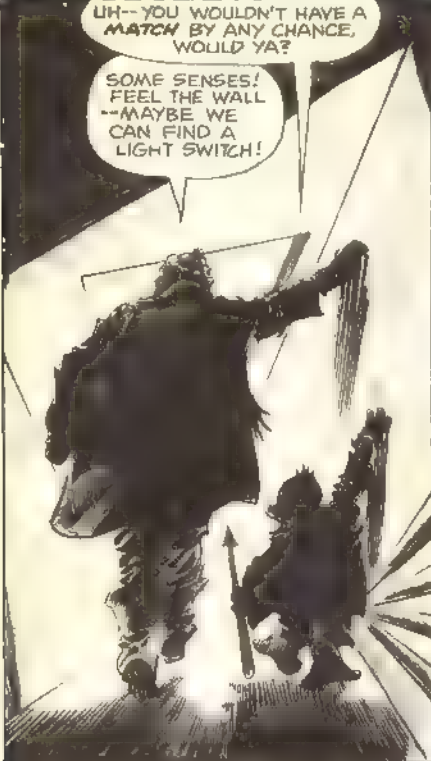
SHEESH! IT'S A REGULAR ANIMAL HOUSE!





UH-- YOU WOULDN'T HAVE A
MATCH BY ANY CHANCE,
WOULD YA?

SOME SENSES!
FEEL THE WALL
--MAYBE WE
CAN FIND A
LIGHT SWITCH!



HEY! GOOD
THINKIN'! WAIT
A MINUTE, I
THINK I FEEL
SOME...



YEEOWWW!
MY DIGITS!

H HOWARD, IT'S
PINBALL
LIZARD!!

MY EYESSS! MY
POOR SSSSTRICKEN EYESSS!
CURSSSE YOU, DUCK! WHY
DID YOU HAVE TO
SSSWITCH ON THE
LIGHTSSS??

JUST WHAT I
WAS ASKIN' MYSELF,
YA HAND-WHACKIN'
SCALY EXCUSE FOR
A GARTER SNAKE!



THAT'SSS RIGHT, YOU SSSSELF-RIGHTEOUSSSS, SSSSIMPERING LITTLE FOWL, TAUNT ME! CURSSSE ME! INSSSULT ME! HUMILIATE ME! EVERYONE ELSSSSE DOESSS - WHY SSSSHOULDN'T YOU?

BUT THE MASSSTER ISSS THE WORSSST!

BUT, LISTEN! THE YOYO CAN'T SEE US, HE'S GLIDED TO US BY THE SOUND OF OUR VOICES! SO YOU TAKE OFF! KEEP TALKIN' AN' LEADIN' HIM AFTER YOU... WHILE I PLAN AN AMBUSH!

HOWARD, THAT'S THE BRAVEST THING YOU'VE SAID ALL NIGHT!

YEAH? WE'LL GET GOIN' BE FORE I TAKE IT BACK!

OKAY! "ONE-TWO-THREE, O'LEARY! FOUR-FIVE-SIX, O'LEARY..."

HE MADE ME WHAT I AM, AND NOW HE SSSSEKSSS TO CUT ME LOOSSSE! BUT I'LL PROVE TO HIM THAT I'M SSSSTILL A VALUABLE SSSSERVANT!

I'LL PROVE IT BY BRINGING HIM YOUR LIFELESSS BODIESSS!

HOWARD, HE MEANS TO KILL US!

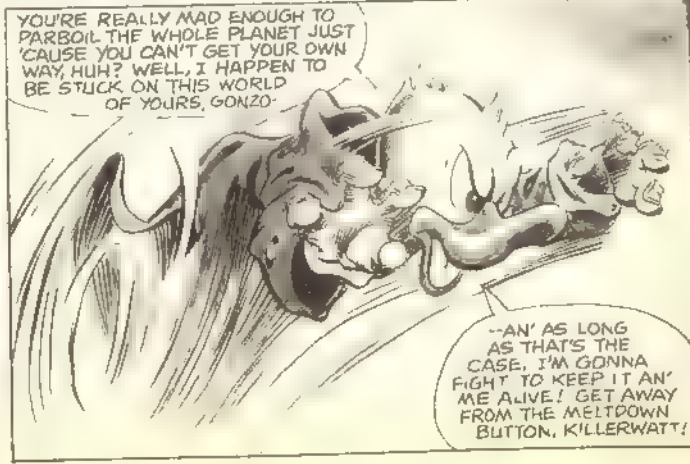
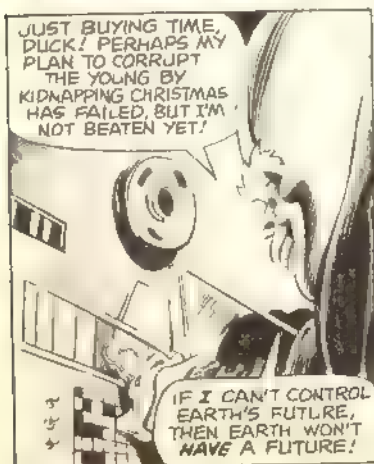
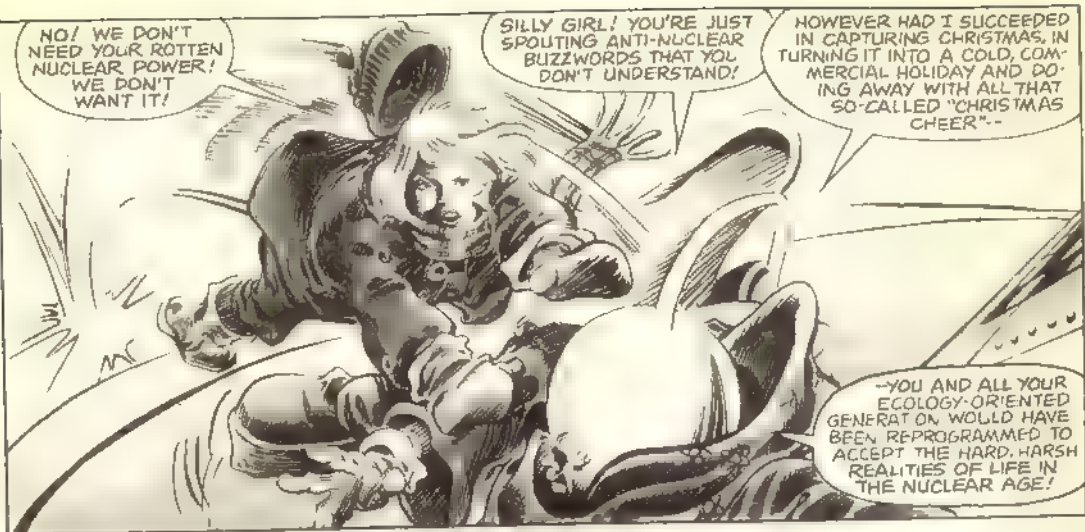
THAT'S HOW YOU INTERPRET IT, KIDDO!

SWELL, WE'RE LURIN' A BLOODTHIRSTY SERPENT INTO AN AMBUSH WITH NURSERY RHYMES! BUT WHAT THE HECK, IT'S WORKIN'! HERE HE COMES--

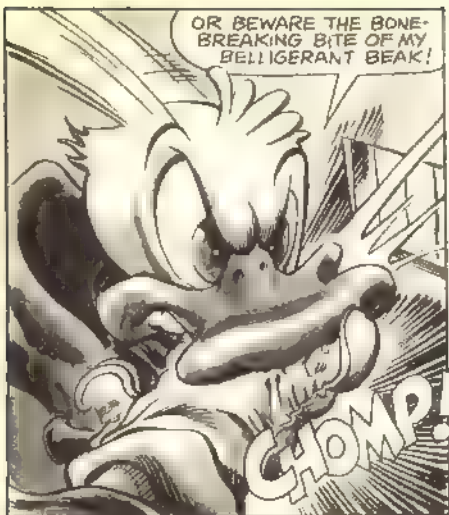
AN' HERE COMES HOWARD'S HAR-POON!

THUNNG





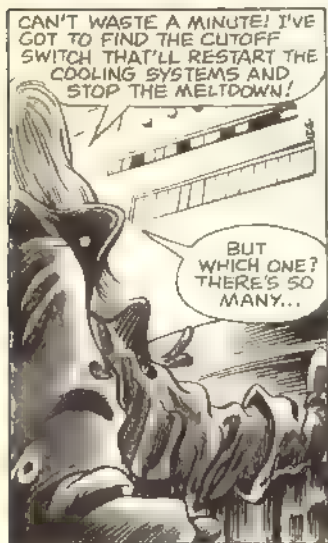
OR BEWARE THE BONE-
BREAKING BITE OF MY
BELLIGERANT BEAK!



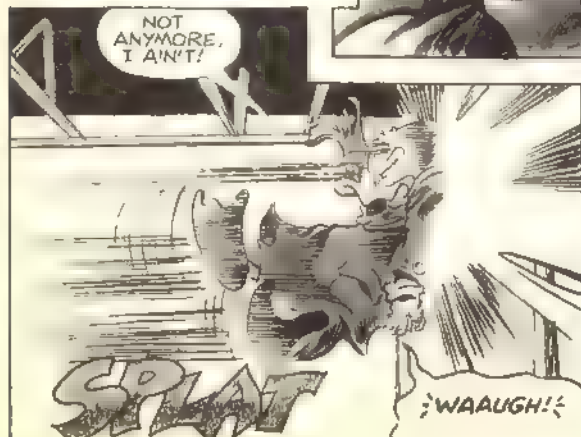
YOU DID IT, HOWARD!
YOU MADE GREEDY
LET ME GO!



CAN'T WASTE A MINUTE! I'VE
GOT TO FIND THE CUTOFF
SWITCH THAT'LL RESTART THE
COOLING SYSTEMS AND
STOP THE MELTDOWN!



NOT
ANYMORE,
I AIN'T!



GET UP HOWARD!
IF AT FIRST YOU
DON'T SUCCEED,
TRY, TRY AGAIN!





GET AWAY FROM
THAT COMPUTER
CONSOLE, LITTLE
GIRL! I'M
WARNING YOU!

NO! Y-YOU DON'T SCARE ME...
MUCH! AND NO MATTER WHAT
YOU DO TO ME AND HOWARD,
I'M NOT GONNA LET YOL
DESTROY THE WORLD
AND CHRISTMAS



WITLESS NIT! WHAT DO
YOU CARE ABOUT EITHER?
HAS THE WORLD BEEN
SO GOOD TO YOU?

AND CHRISTMAS?
WASN'T IT ON
A CHRISTMAS
DAY THAT YOU LOST
YOUR PARENTS?

NO! I
MEAN YES!
I MEAN...

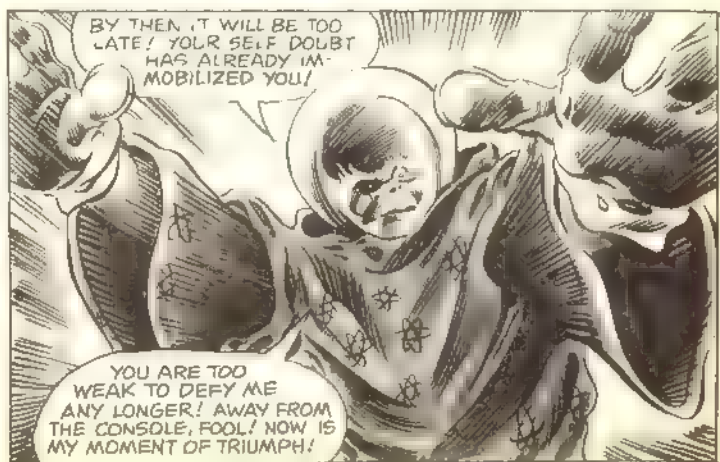


YOU DON'T KNOW **WHAT** YOU
KNOW, CHILD! YOU'VE BEEN
BLOWN FIRST ONE WAY AND
THEN ANOTHER BY FORCES
BEYOND YOUR CONTROL! YOU
HATE AND FEAR WHAT I
REPRESENT BECAUSE YOU'VE
BEEN **TOLD** I'M EVIL!

I'M NOT! I'M NICE, WARM, GREAT
FUN AT PARTIES! YOU MIGHT SAY
THAT, GIVEN THE CHANCE I COULD
LIGHT UP YOUR LIFE! LET ME
SUPPLY THE LOVE YOU NEVER
GOT ELSEWHERE!



NO, YOU - YOU'RE TRYING TO
TRICK ME, TO CONFUSE ME.
BUT I'VE GOTTA THINK
WHAT'S RIGHT, I'VE
GOTTA FIGHT BACK.

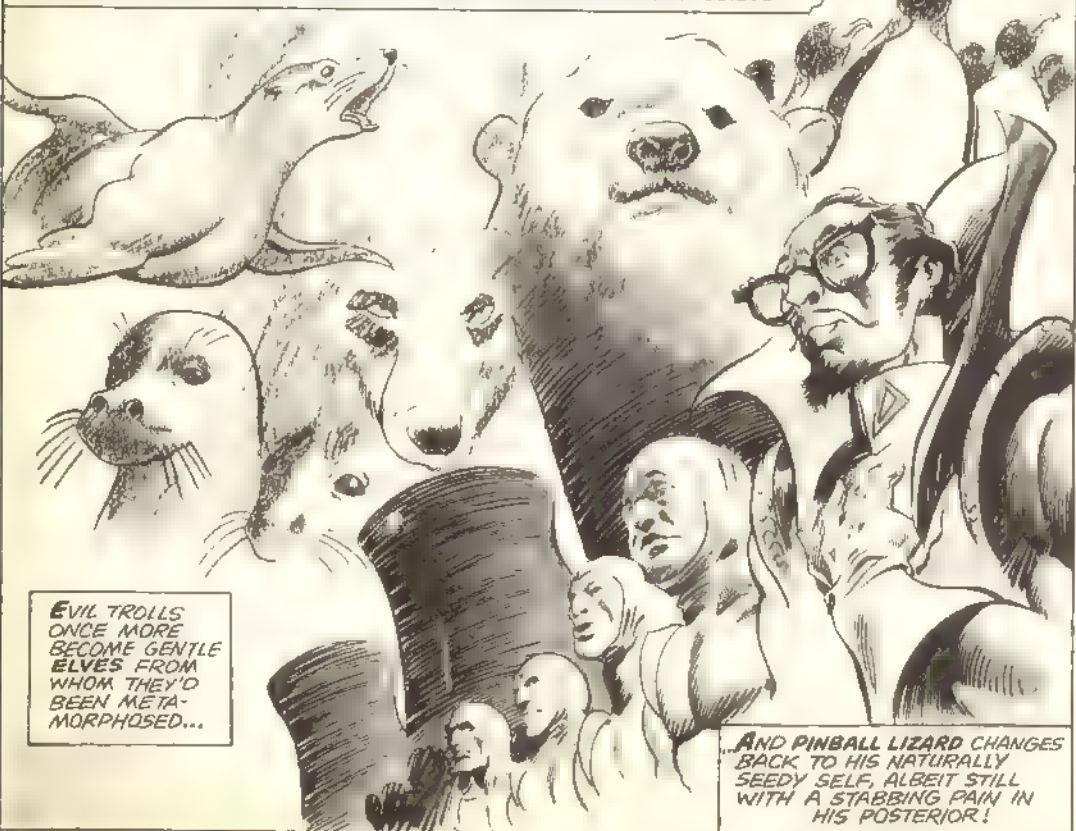


BY THEN, IT WILL BE TOO
LATE! YOUR SELF DOUBT
HAS ALREADY IM-
MOBILIZED YOU!

YOU ARE TOO
WEAK TO DEFEY ME
ANY LONGER! AWAY FROM
THE CONSOLE, FOOL! NOW IS
MY MOMENT OF TRIUMPH!



THROUGHOUT THE NORTH POLE NUCLEAR POWER FACILITY, THE DOWNFALL OF GREEDY KILLERWIATT IMMEDIATELY MANIFESTS ITSELF IN A MASS TRANSFORMATION. THE FEROCIOUS ARCTIC FAUNA REVERT TO THEIR FORMER PEACEFUL GUISES.



EVIL TROLLS
ONCE MORE
BECOME GENTLE
ELVES FROM
WHOM THEY'D
BEEN META-
MORPHOSED...

AND PINBALL LIZARD CHANGES
BACK TO HIS NATURALLY
SEEDY SELF, ALBEIT STILL
WITH A STABBING PAIN IN
HIS POSTERIOR!

AND, SOME TIME LATER, THE WAR-WEARY VICTORS REASSEMBLE ON THE POLAR PLAINS.

THAT DOES IT! THE PLANT HAS BEEN SAFELY SHUT DOWN--NEVER TO START UP AGAIN! I'M CONVERTING MY TOYSHOP TO SOLAR POWER, AND MY SLEIGH WILL FLY USING ORGANIC FUELS!

WHEEZE WHIMPER WHINE

I'VE LEARNED MY LESSON! NO MORE MINDLESS MODERNITY FOR ME! WHY, I MIGHT EVEN GROW A REAL BEARD--IF I STAY WITH THE JOB!

IT TAKES THE OLD GEEZER LONGER THAN MOST, BUT EVENTUALLY HE LEARNS!

THEN IT'S REALLY ALL OVER? CHRISTMAS IS SAVED?

FOR THE TIME BEING, MISS-- BUT I'M SURE THERE'LL BE OTHER ATTEMPTS TO MASS-MARKET THE HOLIDAY!

NOT IF I CAN HELP IT! I'VE LEARNED THAT, IF YOU WANT TO KEEP HOLD OF SOMETHING GOOD, YOU'VE GOT TO BE WILLING TO FIGHT FOR IT!

O, YE OF LITTLE FAITH! YOU DON'T THINK WE'RE SO UN-GRATEFUL THAT WE'D LET YOU RISK YOUR LIVES...THEN STRAND YOU HERE?

YEAH? WELL, I'VE LEARNED A LOT TOO-- SUCH AS (A) I'M FREEZING! (B) SANTA'S SLEIGH IS STILL SHATTERED, AN (C) IT'S A LONG WALK BACK TO CLEVELAND WITHOUT TRANSPORTATION!

I'M AN ELF, REMEMBER? THE MAGICAL KIND!

ZOUNDS, SLNQUIST! YOU'VE TRANSFORMED THIS DOG-SLED INTO A SLEIGH, LADEN WITH GIFTS!

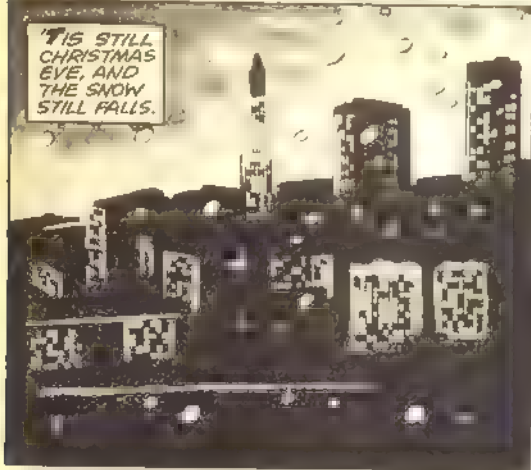
I THOUGHT YOUR ELF CONTRACT FORBODE...

YOU GONNA REPORT ME TO E.L.F., THE ELF LABOR FEDERATION? AFTER ALL, WHAT GOOD'S A SOLAR-POWERED ELF IF HE CAN'T DO A LITTLE MAGIC FOR A GOOD CAUSE?

OBOY, I MAY HAVE TO HUMOR THIS GUY THE REST OF MY LIFE.

CLEVELAND. SCARCELY ANY TIME HAS PASSED, IT SEEMS, WHILE OUR TALE WAS BEING TOLD.

IT'S STILL CHRISTMAS EVE, AND THE SNOW STILL FALLS.



AND CAROL'S RING OUT THE CHILL IN THE SMALL FRAME HOUSE RENTED BY BEVERLY SWITZLER AND HOWARD THE DUCK...

NO-EL, NO-EL, THE ANGELS DID SAY...



SOME MORE EGG NOG, WINDA?

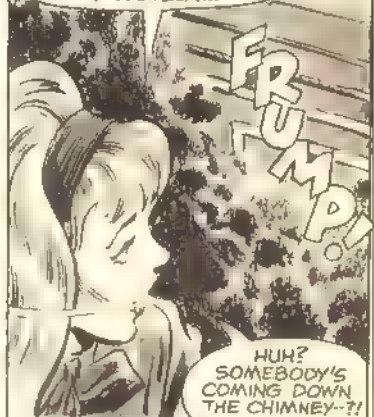
THANK YOU, BEVEVY! IT'S WEAWWY VEWY DEWICIOUS!

SAVE SOME FOR HOWARD AND CAROL!



WONDER WHERE THEY ARE?

HOWARD CAN TAKE CARE OF HIMSELF! BESIDES, WHAT COULD POSSIBLY HAPPEN ON A CHRISTMAS EVE IN CLEVELA...



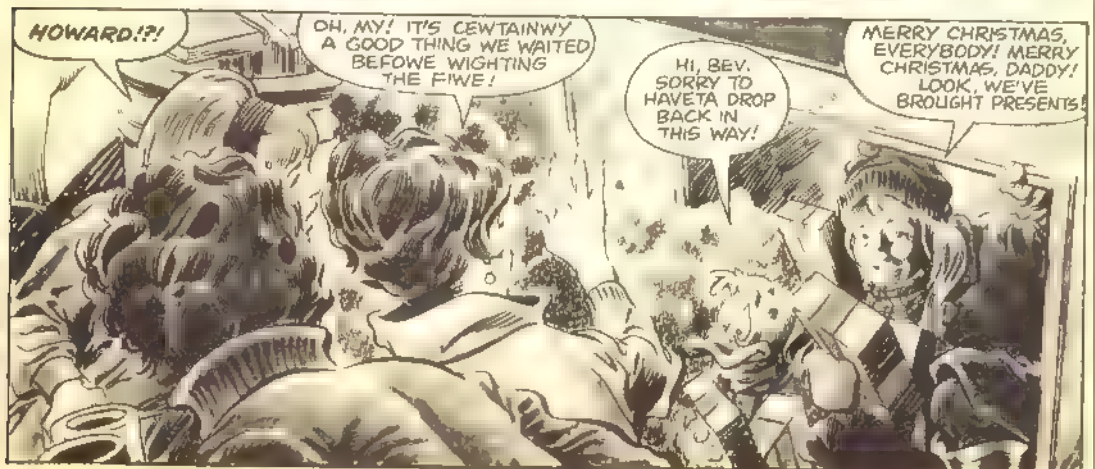
HUH? SOMEBODY'S COMING DOWN THE CHIMNEY-?!

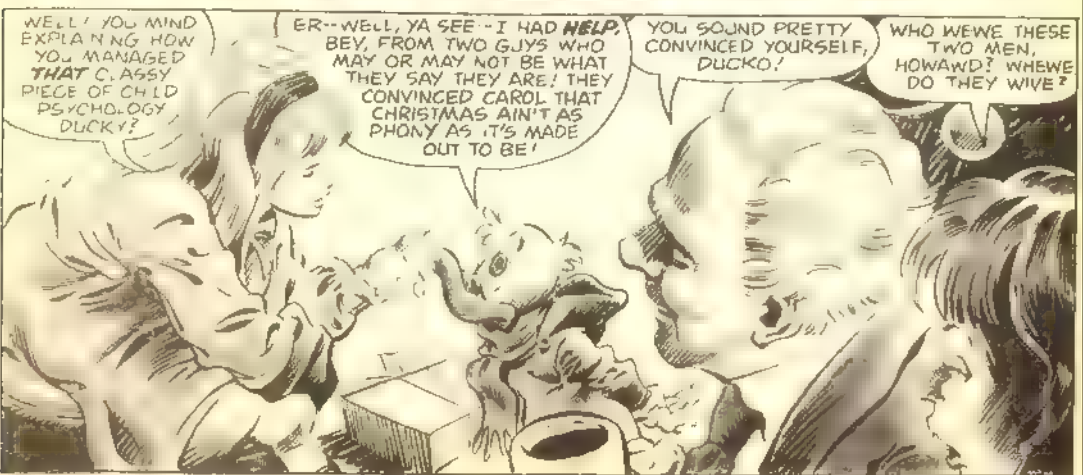
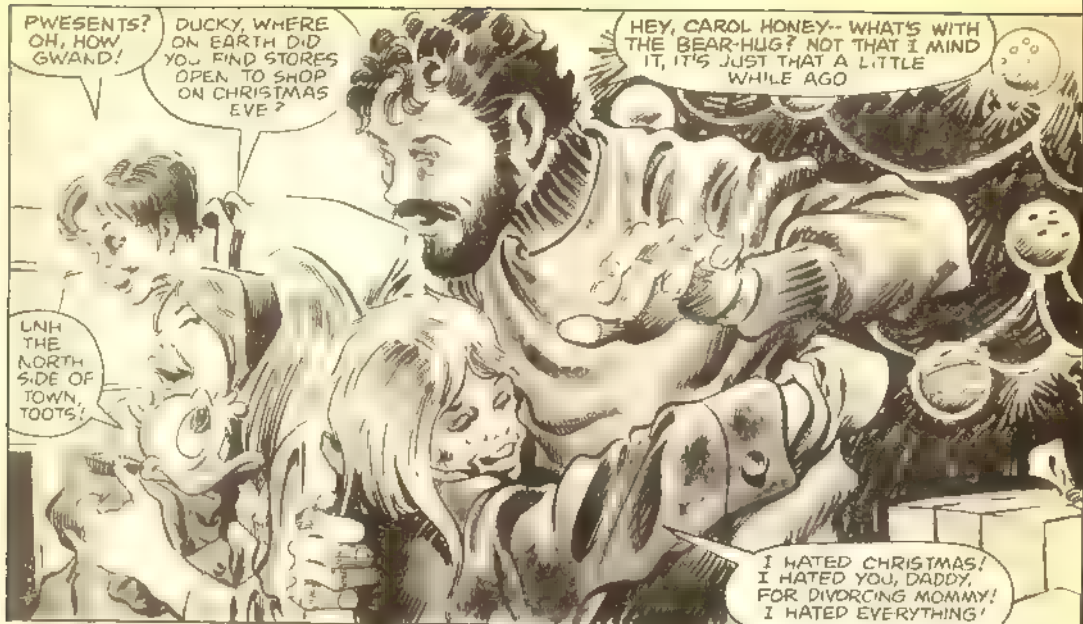
HOWARD!?!

OH, MY! IT'S CERTAINWY A GOOD THING WE WAITED BEFOWE WIGHTING THE FIVE!

HI, BEV. SORRY TO HAVETA DROP BACK IN THIS WAY!

MERRY CHRISTMAS, EVERYBODY! MERRY CHRISTMAS, DADDY! LOOK, WE'VE BROUGHT PRESENTS!





**Merry Christmas
to all...**

UP, YOU
HUSKIES!

ARF!
ARF!

BARK!
BARK!

WINDA, I
DON'T THINK YOU'D
BELIEVE ME IF I
TOLD YOU!

**And to all
a Good Night!**

The
END

DUCK SOUP

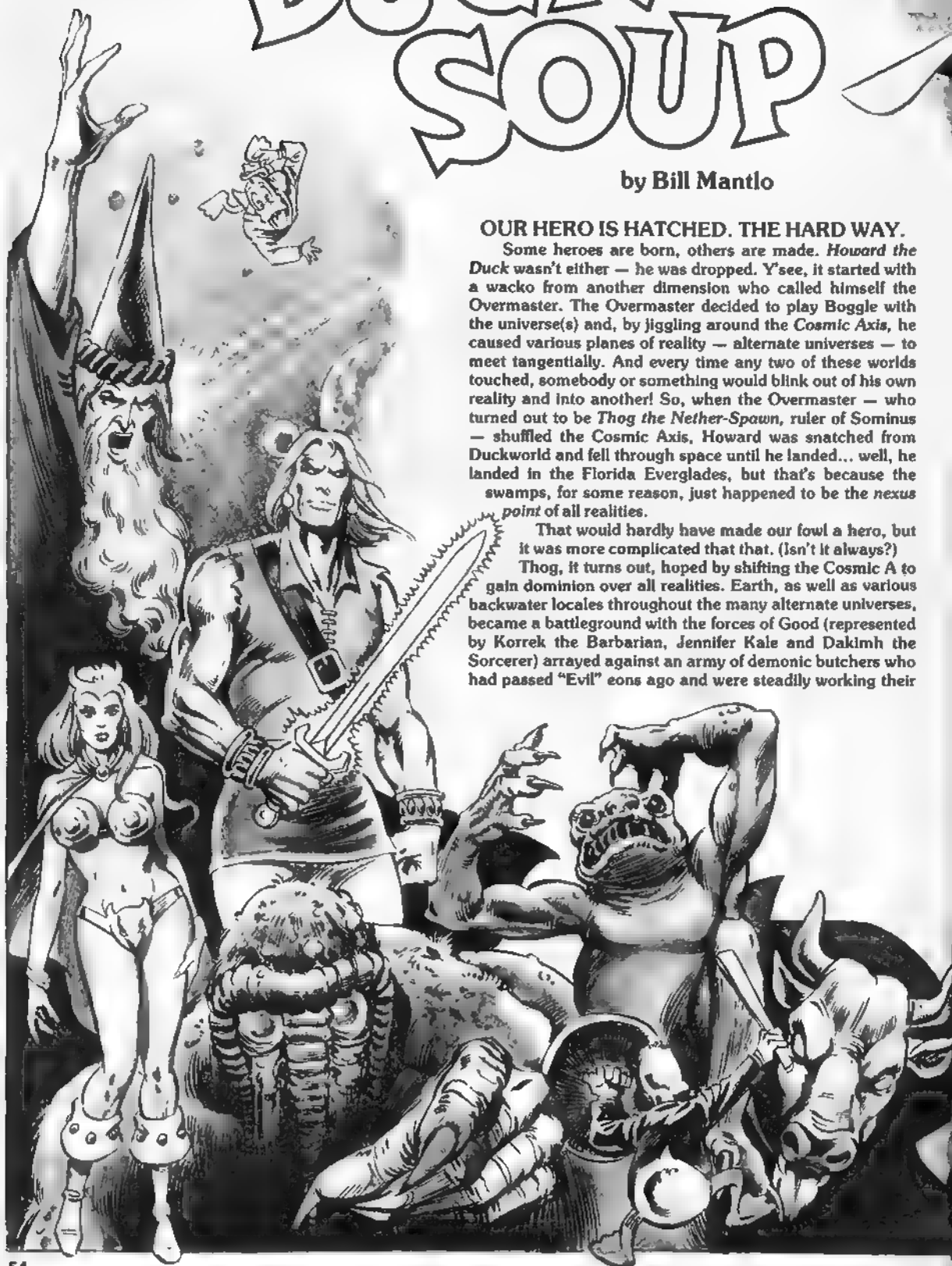
by Bill Mantlo

OUR HERO IS HATCHED. THE HARD WAY.

Some heroes are born, others are made. *Howard the Duck* wasn't either — he was dropped. Y'see, it started with a wacko from another dimension who called himself the Overmaster. The Overmaster decided to play Boggle with the universe(s) and, by jiggling around the *Cosmic Axis*, he caused various planes of reality — alternate universes — to meet tangentially. And every time any two of these worlds touched, somebody or something would blink out of his own reality and into another! So, when the Overmaster — who turned out to be *Thog the Nether-Spawn*, ruler of *Sominus* — shuffled the *Cosmic Axis*, Howard was snatched from Duckworld and fell through space until he landed... well, he landed in the Florida Everglades, but that's because the swamps, for some reason, just happened to be the nexus point of all realities.

That would hardly have made our fowl a hero, but it was more complicated than that. (Isn't it always?)

Thog, it turns out, hoped by shifting the *Cosmic A* to gain dominion over all realities. Earth, as well as various backwater locales throughout the many alternate universes, became a battleground with the forces of Good (represented by *Korrek the Barbarian*, *Jennifer Kale* and *Dakimh the Sorcerer*) arrayed against an army of demonic butchers who had passed "Evil" eons ago and were steadily working their





way up to "Rotten". Dropped into the midst of all this, our notably unheroic drake fought for his life even as he fought down his own hysteria, until Dakimh reappeared and bamfed the quartet to his sorcerous dimension where he explained (relatively) the whole mess, and enlisted their aid in the war against the Overmaster. They set out through a dimensional Nowhere — proceeded to a state of Un-ness — onto a ribbon that laced Nothing to Nullity — and onto the stepping-stones of Oblivion. There Howard misstepped... and fell to Earth.

Earth. You've all heard of it. It's two turns to the right of Alpha Centauri — a big blue marble inhabited by animals, insects... and the ruling class, *hairless apes*. Us, Jack. You and me.

Imagine yourself two foot-seven, feathered, webbed feet, possessed of an argumentative personality, and you'll understand Howard's culture shock upon arriving on our ball of mud... with no way to get home. To him, we were a contradiction — hairless apes, animals. To us, he was — well, a talking duck! It was a concept we could accept in the movies, on TV, or filled with helium and floating thirty feet up during the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, but it wasn't the kind of concept you liked to confront during the



course of your day-to-day reality. Ducks — especially talking ducks — are not the status quo in Cleveland. No way in Cleveland!

BIRD IN AN UNGILDED CAGE.

But Howard wasn't the kind of mallard to give in to despair. Alright, so he was in exile! So what? He could cope — he was copesetic! He'd take what this world had to offer, and wrest his fortune from the very jaws of disaster. That's when *Garko the Man-Frog* leaped from a window-ledge and into Howard's life!

Like the man said, "Perhaps the time he had spent in the *Un-world* had made him too rash, too foolishly daring — or perhaps the sudden appearance of this *monster* had tapped a hitherto unknown reservoir of *courage* within him..." Whatever the case, Howard fought back against Garko with a savagery he's never known before, and found himself filled with a determination to *win*, to carve a place for himself in this world he never made!

He won — and got arrested for his trouble. But his interlude in Cleveland's jails was brief... lasting only as long as it took Police Commissioner Gordonski to find that there was no zipper to Howard's duck suit. Despondent, thrown from jail, nothing but Duck-Bucks in his pocket in a town fiercely adverse to foreign currency, Howard decided the only course of salvation was in finding a job... with the police themselves! To that end he set out to ambush the notorious farm killer that was making headlines and, luring the fanged and caped *Hellcow* to its doom, Howard expected to be justly rewarded. But Cleveland didn't want to own up to talking ducks, be they heroes or not! The forces of law and order turned their blue backs on Howard, leaving him to face a dark and threatening world... *all alone!*

LAME DUCK FOR PRESIDENT!

Rather than that, Howard chose *suicide!* Paddling out over the Cuyahoga River, he approached an ominous tower from which he intended to hurl himself, thus ending his sojourn on Earth. But the tower turned out to be made of credit cards and, scaling its synthetic outer walls, Howard came upon a vision of loveliness held captive by the *Sorcerer Accountant Pro Rato*. He rescued *Beverly Switzler* from the mage's





clutches with the help of a certain friendly neighborhood Spider-Man.

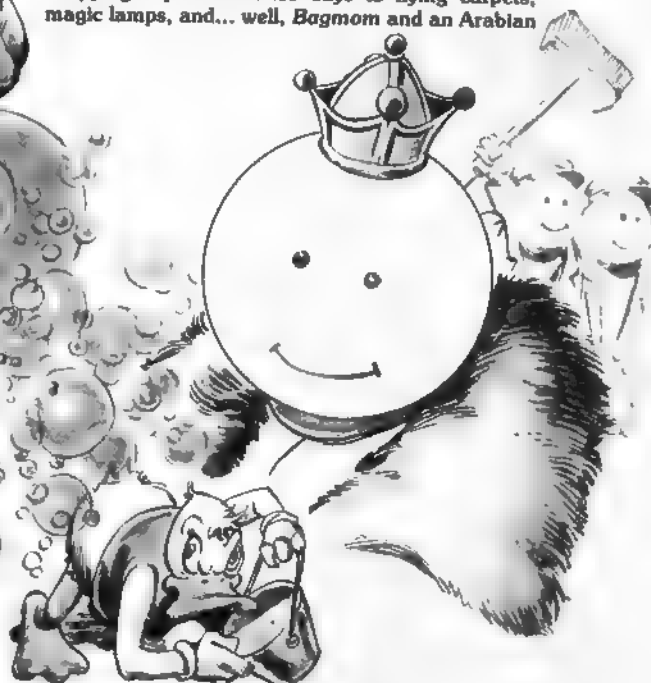
It soon became obvious that Earth wasn't about to allow him to off himself and that maybe — just maybe — there was some reason why he, of all the ducks on Duckworld, was chosen to fall through the Cosmic Axis. Maybe Howard wasn't just any duck! Maybe he was *special*! He was certainly lucky — if you can call it luck — in facing down one bizarre situation after the other, from the *Deadly Space-Turnip*, to *Winky-Man*, to pretty *Patty* and her *Cookie Creature*, to his nomination for — gasp — *President of the United States*!

Forget the fact that he had no chance, that he wasn't a natural-born citizen — there were still those who chose to take his candidacy seriously enough to try to have him humiliated, controlled... or assassinated! Seeking a way out, Howard's subconscious led him to the Greenwich Village doorway of *Dr. Stephen Strange* — Master of the *Mystic Arts* — and mage in residence of the dynamic *Defenders*! Displaying a certain knack for that ol' Black — and White — Magic, Howard wielded *Dr. Strange's* sorcery against a host of mediocrities... and at the same time found his decision made for him. He would *stay* on Earth — for awhile, at any rate.

But the pressures of running for the Presidency, of dodging assassin's bullets and yellow press took its toll on our fowl. Clearing up his and *Bev's* reputation after a plot by *Le Beaver* to smear them both, Howard hopped a bus for *Cleveland*... and *crackup*! Yeah, like in lost marbles, the big breakdown! Between *Kidney Ladies* and demonic possession, he was the perfect candidate for *duck's-head soup* — the funny farm! He wasn't alone, either! Between lisping *Winda Wester* — a nice kid whose parents thought she was possessed by the devil — *Nurse Barbara*, the *Reverend Joon Moon Yuc* and *Yuccies*, and — well, he looked like *Adolph Hitler* — Howard couldn't tell the staff from the inmates. Possessed by the demonic second half of *Daimon Helstrom*, the *Son of Satan*, Howard fled the asylum (and a storyline which we promise soon to resolve!) and became reunited with *Bev*, *Winda* and *Paul Same* (*Winky Man*).

DUCK IN HOT WATER

Normalcy, right? Wrong. Seems even a simple shopping trip leads these days to flying carpets, magic lamps, and... well, *Bagmom* and an Arabian



adventure. But Howard survived that with his id intact and his friends by his side. Survived, in fact, to take an ocean voyage home from that pleasant desert land aboard the SS. Damned. What could be more relaxing than a sea-cruise? Well, as it turned out, almost anything!

No sooner had the Damned set sail — er, steam? — gotten underway — oh, what the heck! — than boulders from the sky and a pleasure-responsive sea-serpent heralded the ultimate menace to Howard's longevity... the coming of the deadly **Doctor Bong!**

With a tap of his clapper Bong separated Bev and Howard from their horror-stricken friends and, as the Damned disappeared over the horizon, our harried hero and his lovely lifemate found themselves in Castle Bong, each awaiting a grotesque fate. Bev was to marry Bong if she wished to spare Howard his life, and Howard was to be given "Neez"! What "Neez" is would take far longer than the brief space we've got at our disposal here, but, needless to say, it ranked right up there with boils and the plague. Howard politely declined, but he hadn't much say in the matter. He was thrown into an organic stew and emerged seconds later, rescued by Fifi — Bong's once-duck, now-woman (sort of) maid — as Howard, the man!

His duckness and his lady taken from him by Bong, Howard fled Bong's island in a flying Bonger, and crash-landed hapless and hopeless in New York's Central Park. It took adrenal excitement in the arms of another female hairless ape to cause Howard to revert to his natural state, in time to flee the pursuing Bong! Flight that led to Howard's first employment on Earth as a short-order dishwasher in a crummy 42nd Street diner, to his confrontation with *Sudd the Scrubbing-Bubble that Walks like a Man*, to his confrontation with the Sinister sooft, and finally to a new friendship with his employer at the diner — *Lee Switzler*, who, it turned out, was Beverly Switzler's Uncle! Small world, ain't it?



THE HORROR SHOW MUST GO ON!

While waiting in Lee's apartment for the S.S. Damned to dock, Howard wound up saving the universe — again — alongside Jennifer Kale, Korrek the Barbarian, Dakimh the Sorcerer... and the macabre *Man-Thing!* That *Star-Waugh* and Bev's marriage to Bong left Howard drained, in a stupor from which only his mistreatment at the conniving hands of the *Ringmaster* and his *Circus of Crime* could rouse him. Howard became... angry! He fought back with a fierceness not seen since his arrival on Earth.

The Ringmaster's nefarious schemes hospitalized Paul Same and Winda Wester. Revenge was sweet as Howard exposed the shady plot to bilk the public during circus performances and took on the Ringmaster man-to-duck! His anger at being thrown like flotsam upon the beach of life carried Howard through his return engagement with Doctor Bong. It was one angry duck who won Beverly back and who once again approached Cleveland determined to face the future and come out even in the lottery of life.

FLAPPING INTO THE FUTURE!

And that brings us up to today! Howard's colorful chronology is the framework upon which our continuing history of Howard's endeavors will be chronicled in our current crop of tales.

You're going to see a Howard as fighting-mad and hot-to-trot as the day he fell through the Cosmic Axis! And, as for that Cosmic A — who knows, it too may soon make a new appearance! The possibilities are infinite in our new, large-sized, epic story format, and we herewith promise that the new **HOWARD THE DUCK** is going to be the most dramatically dynamic Duck you've ever feasted your eager eyes on!

See ya in sixty!



WISER QUACKS

The crew of **HOWARD THE DUCK** would like to thank Leonard Rifas, publisher/editor of **EDUCOMICS**, Box 40246, San Francisco, CA 94140, for granting permission for us to use his dastardly creation, *Greedy Killersnoot*. If you write to Len, tell him *Howard sent ya!*

Dear Bill,

After waiting far too long I read **HOWARD THE DUCK** #1, and I was duly impressed. A lot of praise goes to Rick Marshall for the cover, because it seems designed to raise comments like, "What the hell is that?" from people who don't know *Howie*. The wonderful new logo, the bizarre snapshot of *Howard*... everything. Rick designed well if his aim was to get people to momentarily think *HTD* was naughty, because it resembles a men's magazine more than anything else (and locally, that's where it's being put, a victory of some sort).

But that has nothing to do with the contents. The three stories in the first issue reflect what's always been best with *Howard*: something resembling a plot is going on while *HTD* and company say all sorts of funny things. We were treated to a satire on the old *EC Comics*, superhero comics and *Marvel* horror stories. Those are *Howard*'s roots, and thus represent a good place to start.

It's all just marvelous. I'm sorry I can't come up with any better words, but *HTD* #1 was absolutely bursting with snappy comebacks, slick asides, original bits of terminology and delightful new characters (I cannot express my love for the *Chair-Thing*... it seems to be a *Disney* creation awarded a part in *Fantasia*, but originally crafted to appear in a *Mickey Mouse* short: "Ouch! Pain! First Degree bur-burns!" indeed!).

The difference, Bill, between your duck and *Steve Gerber's* is pretty close to what you once described as the essential difference between yourself and *Gerber*: "He's unhappy all the time, and I'm not." *Gerber's* duck was sad, sorrowful, angry, pathetic, dangerous and a tiny bit psychotic. Your duck is quick-

tempered, belligerent, loud an obnoxious, but feels perfectly justified in being the ultimate wet blanket. Yours is full of life and fun, even if the tone of the mag is supposedly modern morals and urban decay (after seeing *Woody Allen's* brilliant *Manhattan*, I believe the two are not mutually exclusive). Even if *Howard* himself isn't having fun in a particular scene, it's obvious that you are. And that's what's important.

And for the "sex scene" (as a lot of people will refer to it in the months ahead); it was wonderfully handled, satirizing television, PG/R-rated movies, and answered the adolescents' eternal questions about *HTD*. It worked.

However, it does raise some questions about the *HTD/Bev* relationship. During *Gerber's* short stint on the *HTD* syndicated newspaper strip, on one of the "drop" panels on one Sunday page, there was a scene showing *Howard* and *Bev* seated side-by-side on a park bench, staking hands and saying, "I won't tell you my secret sorrow if you don't tell me yours." That statement was pretty representative of *Gerber's* work. *Howard* wants to be left alone, by ducks on his own world, by *Chair-Things* and *Kidney Ladies* here on ours. He is guarding his secret sorrow. He doesn't want to be touched, emotionally or physically.

HOWARD THE DUCK is supposed to be a satire on our culture and our times. Often it is savage satire. But *Howard* is not above the satire, not the pure observer *Gerber* portrayed him as. He is as mired in his own state as everyone else. Don't touch me! Get away! I'm not interested!, that's his message. He becomes involved only when ennnnnnned. When that happens, his anger and rage are rarely

directed at the conspiring elements around him, but towards that something or someone in particular that does it to him. He feels very put upon by all. Why me?, he cries.

He also has a lot of troubles with his feelings. He's uncomfortable with anything short of blind, white rage. He's emotionally like a sort of manic depressive *Donald Duck*, but with a long, long fuse. But, when he goes off, he wants a shotgun.

Gerber, before he left, got very, very heavy, until nothing was funny anymore. Bill, you're moving back toward *HTD's* lighter side (though *Howie* was himself throughout), and I prefer it (at least for awhile) that way. But what I'm trying to say is that *Howie* is as fallible as his creators. When *Gerber* was in charge, *Howie's* wisdom was uttered as if from the mouth of God himself; pronouncements of total and clear truth. Now we know different, and we have someone a little bit more removed at the reins. Perhaps we'll see a different viewpoint. Again, I have to use *Manhattan* as an example. It was the first time *Woody Allen* didn't walk away with clean hands. He was a jerk, and he knew it, and understood he would probably always be a jerk in that respect. *Howie* doesn't see it that way.

I hope I'm making some sense, because I care about all this. Lord knows why.

HOWARD THE DUCK is a great success, comic and magazine. I hope it continues to be. Good luck, Bill.

Steven Alan Bennett
687 Merton Avenue
Arkon, OH 44305

Dear People:

Thanks. For what?, you may ask. So I will answer: For making **HOWARD THE DUCK** a more adult comic magazine. It was about time that our favorite fowl grew up. I don't believe that *Howard* was ever meant for the kiddie color comics in the first place. While I would still like to see *Howard's* magazine go to color printing, even in the large black-and-white format we have a more interesting package than before. I'm sure you'll get volumes of hate mail from kids and their parents about the nude scenes between *Howard* and *Bev*, but don't pay any mind to those people. There are always those who would stop the progress of the comic medium. Those types of people we can do without!

Michael A. Gonzales
Box #18696
Walbrook Station
Baltimore, MD 71218

Dear Rick, Bill, Gene and Mike,
HOWARD THE DUCK #1 was

better than I would have thought possible. With so many pages devoted to *Howie* the premiere issue almost, but not quite, equalled the great days of **HOWARD THE DUCK** #1-10, when *Steve Gerber* and *Howard* were at their greatest.

Bill, while I disliked your two-issue stint on the *HTD* color comic, here, with the new format, you seem to have hit a home run! *Gene Colan's* art sparkled with greatness, but *Michael Golden* didn't seem to catch the spirit of *HTD*. *Mike* should stay on *MICRONAUTS* where he's the acknowledged master.

Hooman Mehran
44 Florence Drive
Chappaqua, NY 10514

Dear Marvel,

Well, *Howard's* finally back! *Bill Mantlo* has done better than I expected in taking over from *Steve Gerber*. The three stories in *HTD* #1 were good, but I'm eagerly awaiting the *Pro Rata* showdown and the "Pants" story (mentioned in the *Comics Journal*) slated for *HTD* #2.

I was disappointed with the last page. I've always felt *Howard* and *Bev* had one of those "doomed from the start" relationships. It certainly has never been suggested in the past that *Howard* and *Bev* were "getting it on". It seemed unnatural. Please, keep *Howard* sexless.

Try not to always have the outlandish super-villain stories. "I Want Money" (*HTD* comic #5) and "Cooking with Gas" (*HTD* #28) are examples of other kinds of plots (although I felt the latter had too little *Howard*).

Why did you change the logo? I liked it the way it was.

Gery De Jong
1011 Hazel Street
Pella, Iowa 50219

We don't agree with your criticism of *Howard* and *Bev's* love life, Gary. "Doomed from the start" relationships are not part of what *Bill* considers the "new" *Howard*, and nothing could be more natural in his eyes than *Bev* and *Howie* sharing each other's lives completely. Your point about super-villains appearing in every story is well-taken, and we'll bear it in mind in the future. As for the changed logo... are you listening, Lynn?

Dear Rick, Bill and Gene,

Having just finished reading **HOWARD THE DUCK** #1, I felt it only proper that I make my thoughts known.

All in all it was a fine effort for all concerned. The artwork by *Messers. Golden* and *Colan* was their usual, excellent fare. *Bill*,

your stories (Oh, no! Here it comes! Sheer, unadulterated praise!) were great. You have returned Howard to where he belongs. I feel you have recaptured the essence of HTD that Steve Gerber had in the first five or six issues of the color comics and then, inexplicably, lost.

I could only find three things I wasn't satisfied with, or at least, that irritated me. First and foremost was HTD #1's asinine cover design. The painting, drawing, or whatever you use as a cover illustration should take up more than 40% of the usable space. The use of type as a design element is fine, but not to the exclusion of a cover illustration. You know, as well as I, that cover art is the prime mover of the casual reader. So, please, a little more art.

Secondly, I have long suspected that Bev and the duck had something going between them, but to actually see it in print seemed to destroy some of the mystique. Of course, I'm talking about the last page. Now don't get me wrong. I like nudity and sex as much as the next person, but it does seem to have taken some of the mystery away.

Third, I'm not too crazy about the new cover logo.

Rick Mayhall
2017 Parkwood
Bastrop, LA 71220

The last page of HTD #1 is, perhaps unavoidably, bound to create somewhat of a stir in the history of the graphic medium. Bill wrote the page as tastefully as he knew how, ending it with a sensitive "Leda and the swan" tableau showing Bev and Howard in shadow. That scene was removed and replaced with what saw print. Bill would have rather seen panel five replaced by a purely black panel, with the word balloons floating in ebony space, thus maintaining the sense of "mystery."

To the HTD staff,

HOWARD THE DUCK #1 was, in my opinion, one of Marvel's greatest failures. The artwork, while poor, was the best part of the magazine. Michael Golden's stuff had an enthusiastic, inventive flavor and was much livelier than Colan Klaus Janson incorporated his unique, crisp style into the black-and-white format very nicely. Colan's work looked rushed. He is usually one of my favorite artists, but it's obvious that he's allowed himself to become overextended lately. The inkers on the last two stories did not know what they were doing. I was surprised at McLeod; he's done better than this poor imitation of Tom Palmer's wash style. Dave

Simons (who?) follows the coloring book school of shading with his haphazard application of tones.

Now, the part of the mag that turned out to be the worst part of the book, the writing. You are trying for social satire in the stories, but there is no humor. You scream (literally) that middle-American society is dull, while your own stories are even more boring. Where is the smooth intricacy and wit of Steve Gerber? The interesting, Carl Barks-like situations? Out from under the thumb of the Comics Code, you could have even have had some bawdy humor, a la Fritz the Cat, yet you bungled that, too.

The dialogue was uninspired, repetitious and meaningless. The characterizations depended solely on ground already covered. The situations and plots (in my opinion, the most important part of any story) were more than dull. They were like watching someone collect garbage: simple, uninteresting and repulsive.

It seems that stupidity was one of this book's themes. "Jackpot the One-Armed Bandit"? What kind of villain stores enough tokens in his stomach to stop an oncoming car? By the Flames of the Faltine! Is lobotomy the current fashion among Marvel writers? Another unbelievably bad move was in bringing back the Kidney Lady as a hack sorceress. Where is your integrity, Mantlo? Gerber already worked her ragged in the color comic. Anything left of the character is totally unfunny.

By the way — if you think you're going to get away with calling that "menu design" on the front of your magazine a cover, you're mistaken!

Things you can do to improve HTD are: Use "pure artwork" covers. Utilize the talents of more pencilers; Michael Golden, Alex Nino, Tom Sutton, Don Newton, etc., and relieve Colan (voluntarily or not) of his load. Get your inkers to ink in their own styles. Either have Mantlo write better stories, concentrating on humor or the plots themselves, or get your sticky, rewriting fingers out of the scripts, Marshall! You proved yourself incapable as a writer in the JAWS II comic with that horrible "synopsis-style" script. Have other Marvel writers take a whack at HTD. Please use this larger, dynamic format to its fullest extent!

Scott A. Gilbert
9400 Fredricksburg Rd./#1002
San Antonio, TX 78240

Glad you liked HTD #1, Scott! Seriously, though, there are things to be said in defense of

your particular criticisms of the mag and, if you'll give us the chance, we'll say them. First, Gentleman Gene Colan drew his two-thirds of HTD #1 as a color comic. In fact, all the stories in our premiere issue were plotted, drawn and written as, respectively, issues thirty-two through thirty-five of the now sadly defunct HOWARD THE DUCK color comic. That might possibly explain the somewhat untutored appearance of Gene's art, and it definitely explains the tone of the stories which, as you might now be given to understand, were plotted "under the thumb of the Comics Code". It also explains any fractured sense of pacing, as Bill had to labor to tie together three tales into one cohesive magazine that would have otherwise appeared over a six-month period.

Since you seem to feel that the Kidney Lady had been overused before this final appearance, we're not too sorry we tried to revamp her (though, as you'll see by reading the following letters, a lot of your fellow readers are on your side). New editor Lynn Graeme will be taking a good, hard look at how this mag will be designed in the future, and we think you'll see more of an integration between the type and the cover art. We're taking your criticisms to heart, Scott. Let us know how we do in succeeding issues.

Dear Duckies,

As I have read and thoroughly enjoyed every issue of the HTD color comic, it really made me sad to hear that that mag was cancelled. Now, as to its replacement: the HOWARD THE DUCK magazine is a dismal flop. The "Mr. Chicken" story did not make me laugh, or even smile. It was boring. Michael Golden's art was below his MICRONAUTS par and didn't look good in black-and-white. A real disappointment. On to story two: Ah, the master! Gene Colan may not have been the first artist to draw Howard, but he is the best! The One-Armed Bandit was an original, Gerber-type character, and very funny, but the story lacked plot and was hard to follow. Story three: Gene's art was, again, fantastic. But, Mantlo, what have you done to the Kidney Lady??? She was so much more real (and easier to hate) when she was just a nasty old fool! And the Chair-Thing!!! That wasn't even funny!

All I can say is, somebody whose two biggest comics are about kiddie toys should not be writing satire.

Todd Hines
1217 32nd Street
W. Des Moines, IA 50265

Dear Marvel,

I have so many comments on your new HOWARD THE DUCK magazine that I don't know where to start this letter. So I'll start here.

The cover left a lot to be desired. Like why a question mark after the logo? Also, the snapshot of Howard on the cover reminded me of Fritz the Cat, and not the old lovable duck we've all come to cherish. The drawing on the inside front cover was better, and might make a great poster (hint, hint).

I thought the Mr. Chicken story stunk. Well, wait a minute, I'll take that back. The story was all right, but Mr. Chicken himself stunk. I mean, there is very little to find funny in a villain who sees everyone as chickens.

Jackpot was real good, I hope we see more of him (how about his origin?). Keep Howard in the Taxi business. This could spin off into an adventure by itself. By the way, I really liked Claude Starkowitz.

But From Hell it Cometh" was a downer. I mean, why does every bad guy Howard encounters have to be insane? Why can't he battle some real pros, like Dr. Doom? Give us some articles to read, like in SAVAGE SWORD, and get a letters page going. I like to hear what other readers have to say.

Phil Parr
11040 Stony Brook
Grand Ledge, MI 48837

Dear Guys,

Re: HOWARD THE DUCK #1, the magazine... you have turned a good comic book into a dirty, cheap, trashy adult comic book. I am ashamed by page 63. You have turned Howard into some bum! I can't believe that Stan let this book come out. Most of Howard's fans are disappointed in you guys. Can't you go back to the color comic? I don't like to see Howard like this, so see if you can shape things up a little... please???

Andrew Champion
Houston, TX

Well, Andrew, you'll now get to see Howard dressed all the time.

Next issue, our indomitable drake journeys to the Big Apple in quest of the long-lost Cosmic Key, and discovers that you are what you eat in the consumer-conscious environs of middle America. Be here for "The Maltese Cockroach." You may even find a few surprises awaiting!

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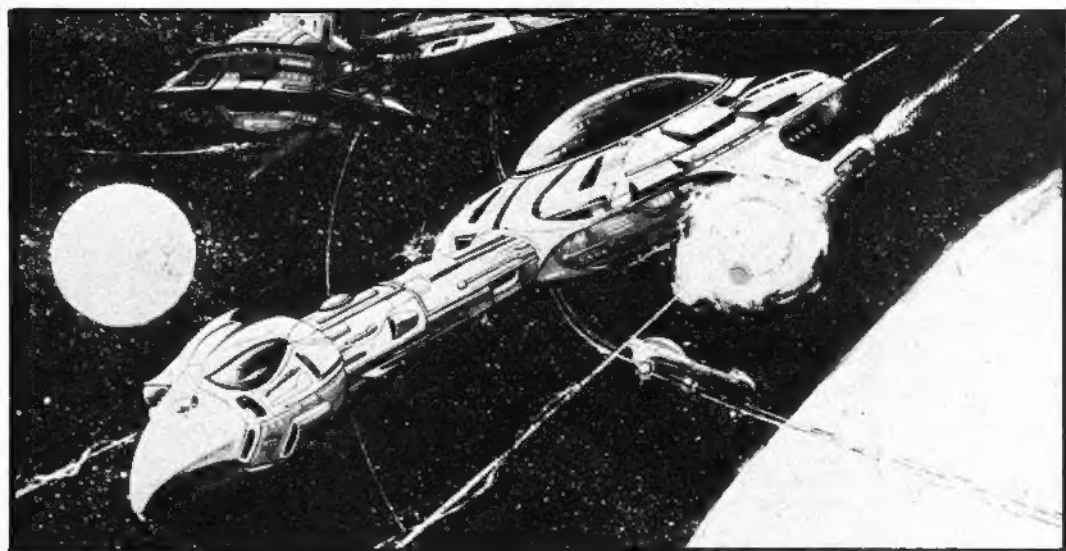
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